



Logo by Doug Webb

Binghamton Township Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Serving Past and Present Residents of the Town of Binghamton, NY
and its Neighboring Towns

Vol. 12 No. 2

APR-MAY-JUNE 2015

The Binghamton Township Historical Society is dedicated to the preservation of the history of the region and its inhabitants. It meets four times each month, April through October. The 2015 schedule will be **first and third Monday @ 1:00 pm**, and **second and fourth Tuesday @ 6:00 pm** each month. Our **business meeting** is the **first Monday** of the month, and all others are **workshops**. All meetings are in the old Hawleyton Methodist Church's Fellowship Hall located at the junction of Hawleyton Road (an extension of Pennsylvania Avenue) and Saddlemire Road just after the Hawleyton Rd./Park Ave. junction. Visitors are always welcome. Annual dues are \$10.00 for individuals, \$15.00 for families (due by September, the start of our fiscal year) and includes the Newsletter. The Newsletter in color may be viewed on www.townofbinghamton.com or <http://binghamtonhistorical.org>.

President's Corner

Esther Pettengill

The older I get, the faster time seems to fly by. Perhaps it was the brutally cold winter that inspired hibernation as opposed to completing indoor projects. Whatever the reason, I find myself playing "catch up" once again. The more I accomplish, the more there seems to need doing.

MEETINGS: The Historical Society now meets four times each month, with the first monthly meeting being our business meeting. All meetings have been scheduled to provide the most opportunities for anyone who would like to join the fun. Two of our four meetings are on Tuesday evenings from 6-8pm for folks who work during the day.

EVENTS: We have four events scheduled or semi-scheduled, along with another fundraiser in the planning stages. Mark your calendars and plan to join us for one or more of them. **Monday, May 25** from 11:00am—1:00pm is our traditional Memorial Day Open House. **Saturday, June 20** from 1:00pm-3:00pm we will help New York State celebrate the *Path Through History Weekend*. (Many other museums and historical societies have activities that weekend. Please note, we do not open on Sunday, so if you were planning to tour the Binghamton events that weekend, consider visiting us on Saturday.) **In July**, we are planning a *Community Gathering* event. Final details are still to be arranged. Check the Press & Sun Bulletin and the Country

Courier for further information closer to July. Our *Annual Meeting and Covered Dish* luncheon is scheduled for **Saturday, September 19** beginning at 11:00am. We eat promptly at Noon, with a short program to follow the meal.

ONGOING: We are still working on sorting, cataloging and digitizing our paper archives. It is a long process but will provide huge benefits to our community and other researchers when we have completed it. Please be prepared to say **YES** when you are asked to help us for an evening or afternoon (2hrs maximum).

USE THE MUSEUM AS A RESOURCE: Our mission includes preserving artifacts for future generations, and serving the public through tours and other educational programs. To that end we would be happy to conduct tours for any occasion. Birthdays, anniversary celebrations, family reunions, and other gatherings are fine times to plan a group visit to the museum. In addition to the scheduled events listed above, tours can be given almost any time. Call one of our officers to arrange for your group tour. We do not yet charge admission, but we do welcome donations to help defray our costs.

MEMBERSHIP: We appreciate all of you who faithfully renew your membership every year. Our budget is modest, and your generosity has

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Sometimes, even using all the tips found thus far in our Research Tips column, it is still possible to become frustrated with your results or lack of same. Perhaps all you have found are dates and places; birth, death, and marriages. At those times I look at “how to” books or books containing different ideas than I have already tried.

One book I found particularly useful is “Hidden Sources: Family History in Unlikely Places” by Laura Szucs Pfeiffer. The book bears a 2000 copyright and first printing date, but it is possible there is a more recent update. It is published by Ancestry, the publishing department of Ancestry.com.

One example of the hidden sources listed in this book is “**artifacts.**” This brought to mind a piece of family lore from my own family. I have heard this story many times from various relatives. Indulge me for a moment. There is a point here, I promise.

My great, great-grandfather, Smith Quimby, and his wife lived in Worcester, Massachusetts. Five children were born to them there. The first three died before the age of six. In 1866 only two little girls remained and, the story says, Smith was told by the family doctor, “...you’ll never raise children in this climate. Go South!” Sometime before 1869, when the next child was born, Smith moved his family south—to Warwick, Rhode Island, a distance of about 60 miles. We always laughed about that. Such a sort distance—60 miles. But they raised five children there.

In 1998 my mother and I found a **silver pocket watch** among my father’s possession, inscribed, “Presented to Capt. Quimby by Ocean Hose Co., No. 2, 1860” (a fire company in Worcester). That led us to the library in Worcester where we found several books with records of Ocean Hose Company. We learned more little facts about Fire Captain Smith. On our ride home we also had a revelation of sorts. Smith had moved his family “south” between 1866 and 1869, when horses and wagons would have been used. There were only dirt roads in those days. The total distance was likely closer

To 80 or 90 miles than today’s straighter highway mileage of 60-65 Miles. All the family’s possessions would have been carried in the wagon. Traveling at no more than 18 or 20 miles a day, with tow little girls, it likely took them close to a week to make the trip. Rhode Island was probably as far “south” as they cared to go.

Take a good look at the **heirlooms and artifacts** passed along in your family. Interview other relatives who may be able to shed light on the origins or occasions for their being in your family’s collection. You never know what information you can find. And in the process, you will also become more aware of the historical, economical and social circumstances of their lives.

In Memoriam

It is with deepest sympathy that we acknowledge the death of four Binghamton Township Historical Society Members:

Blakeslee, Robert (Bob) L. Jr. passed away on February 19, 2015 at the age of 80. He was extremely proud to have served his country in the U.S. Navy during the Korean Conflict.

DePuy, George W. former U.S. Navy pilot and retired Captain for American Airlines, died on March 12, 2015. He was 81.

Sullivan, Genevieve M., 89, died Sunday March, 15, 2015. Genny was a long-time supporter of the Binghamton Town Historical Society (BTHS). She served as President for a couple of terms, and as Secretary, among many other vital contributions, such as helping to begin the BTHS newsletter.

Vosburg, Robert “Wimpy”, 83, a true icon of the area, passed away Friday, March 20, 2015. Many people collect things throughout their lives — Wimpy collected friends. [A Special Tribute is included in this newsletter]

Remembering an Icon

Fran Maxian Hibbard

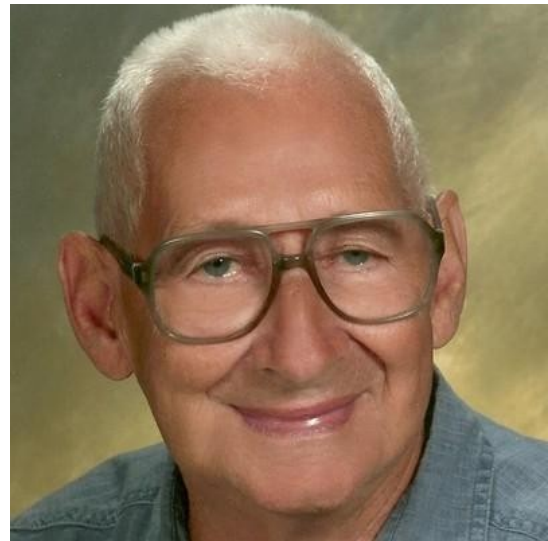
On March 20, 2015, the Town of Binghamton lost an icon to the area. Robert (Wimpy) Vosburg passed away at the age of 83. Wimpy lived his life here becoming well known and loved by many.

I've lived in the town most of my life, so doing business at the Vosburg's Store was a normal part of shopping there. Whether it was for gas that was pumped by Wimpy, or another member of the family or buying goods in the store, usually Wimpy was there. The store was his life, so those who stopped by, whether locals or those passing through met and knew Wimpy.

Wimpy didn't attend Grove School as his twin brother, Ralph, did. Wimpy went to Hawleyton School. So my schooling days weren't with Wimpy. However, when my mom or dad needed something I was sure to go as I knew I could choose a "goodie" from the vast assortment of penny candy. It was put into a small brown bag that was all mine.

Hi nickname "Wimpy" was appropriate for his size but that was all. He made up for his size in character and personality. In the early 50's, there was a group of us town teens who decided to go to the carnival at Stowe Flats, now the K-Mart Plaza on State Street is there. It was decided to save some money, being the smallest, Wimpy would get into the trunk of the car. Once inside and parked, he was let out.

[Vosburg's Store]



Through the years, my children always wanted to go to Wimpy's where they, too, enjoyed picking out "goodies" of their choice. Even on Halloween, we would trick n' treat Vosburg's store. Wimpy was there making this day memorable.

Again, as more years passed, my daughter, who lived out of the area came home for a few days. It was decided we'd go to Brackney Inn for supper. My daughter was amazed as we walked in, Wimpy knew who she was and they chatted for a bit. He hadn't seen her for years... but still knew her. Those who frequented Brackney Inn knew Wimpy. His unusual laugh was his signature of warmth and friendship.

As years passed and the store was demolished, Wimpy lived on the corner of Saddle mire and Hawleyton Roads. Here Wimpy was seen sitting and waving to those who tooted to acknowledge a "Hi". Even the current Brookside Elementary children know who Wimpy was.

He will be missed by all who knew him wherever they are. Robert (Wimpy) Vosburg, rest in peace.

A friend for years,
Fran Maxian Hibbard

Esther Pettengill helps save people's memories. In a time when technology is leaping and bounding forward, Ms. Pettengill is busy trying to preserve the memories of where we've been. Serving as President of the Binghamton Township Historical Society, she is part of a small team of people who are working toward a common goal: the preservation of the history of their town. And they could use some help.

"My grandkids love hearing about what I did as a kid growing up in the country," she said, referring to her childhood in Rhode Island. "We live in a small part off a bigger city, so we related to a larger part of the population. I can relate to that here, living in the Town of Binghamton. And, some of the artifacts we have in the museum were things we had back in Rhode Island."

Pettengill mentioned the ice man and the coal man, who came door to door with their deliveries, and the salesmen of farm products who came to each house when the farmers were too busy to make trips to town. It was a way of life that is foreign to the young people who come and visit the museum, located at 923 Hawleyton Road in the old Hawleyton church.

There are displays inside setup for public viewing, including quilts, photographs, and tools of time, but there are also empty rooms in need of repair before they can be filled with the artifacts in storage. Pettengill outlined some of the problems the Historical Society is facing these days, as they try to expand their offerings. "We've had real problems with leaks in the ceiling, water damage to the floors, and no money in the budget for repairs. So at one point we put tarps on the roof as our only recourse. We had to do something." They patched where they could, then raised money for a new roof. And then came the raccoon problem.

Secretary, Fran Hibbard, was on hand to describe the discovery of ceiling bits on the floor, and animal droppings. "At first, we wondered if someone's dog had gotten in. But it was a pair of raccoons. We called a professional to trap them, and

He told us that there were toxic fumes from all the droppings and you could get parasites if you didn't wear a mask and gloves while cleaning up the mess." The raccoons were removed, the mess cleaned up, and a new roof vent put in, after covering the old slotted ones with aluminum sheeting. Unfortunately, more persistent raccoons broke through the aluminum and moved in, creating more costly damage before they, too, were trapped and removed.

"We had a fundraiser to help with the cost of repairs and clean up, but not many people heard about it, so attendance was low. We appreciated all those who did come, and we raised \$293 for our bills. But we've learned lessons from all this," Pettengill said. "we need to talk to the public, not just to ourselves. We can't expect people to read our minds about what we need. Right now, we're doing this by ourselves and if one or two of us got ill, who would take care of things?" The women talked about the group of 20 or more people who had at one time been active members of the Historical Society, but as the number of helpers dropped, the majority of work has fallen on the few who remain.

Ms. Pettengill said that one valued helper, Ric Keiser, originally dropped by to bring his grandmother's donation of an antique washing machine. When he saw their need for help, he started volunteering his time on a regular basis. "If we had more volunteers, we could tend to some of the building's cosmetic needs that would then encourage more visitors. We did have a Town of Binghamton Cub Scouts troop come in last year, and we really appreciated their help."

The newsletter began in January of 1999, on just a single page. Today it is a quarterly publication sent out to all the names on the membership list. Ms. Hibbard's grandson, Brent Pennington, created the Historical Society's website that can be viewed at www.BinghamtonHistorical.org. The most recent issue can be accessed via link at www.TownOfBinghamton.com, along with information on subscribing, donating, or becoming a member.

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The Salt & Pepper Dilemma “Internet Chaff”

Some years ago, there was a Mensa convention in San Francisco. Mensa, as you know, is a national organization for people who have an IQ of 140 or higher.

Several of the Mensa members went out for lunch at a local café. When they sat down, one of them discovered that their salt shaker contained pepper, and their pepper shaker was full of salt. How could they swap the contents of the two bottles without spilling any, and using only the implements at hand? Clearly—this was a job for Mensa minds.

The group debated the problem and presented ideas and finally, came up with a brilliant solution involving a napkin, a straw, and an empty saucer.

They called the waitress over, ready to dazzle her with their solution.

“Ma’am,” they said, “we couldn’t help but notice that the pepper shaker contains salt and the salt shaker contains pepper.”

But before they could finish, the waitress interrupted. “Oh, sorry about that.” She leaned over the table unscrewed the caps of both the bottles and switched them.

There was dead silence at the Mensa table.

Reminds me of our government, solutions could be so simple, but the brilliant minds have to make the situation difficult.

...continued from page 4—Need for Volunteers

As our area has been hard hit by flooding in recent years, many people lost precious mementos and memories. The Historical Society is trying to prevent loss through the passage of time, so that future generations will know what life was like here years ago. The Society was honored by unanimous vote, as the 2013 Town of Binghamton Citizen of the Year. They have dreams of what the museum could one day become, perhaps having an outreach program. But for those dreams to become reality, they need helping hands.

WANTED

We are looking for old photos of businesses, homes, scenery or history of Hawleyton for display at the Binghamton Township Historical Society Museum, or for our newsletter. If you’d wish your items to be returned, please include your name and address. A return-address, stamped envelope would be appreciated also. Please don’t write on the exhibit itself, that could drastically reduce it’s value.

Please send exhibits to either address. Thank you

Phyllis A. Hawley
BTHS Vice-President
3598 Saddlemire Rd.
Binghamton, NY 13903

Maurice Howe
3775 Brady Hill Rd.
Binghamton, NY
13903

...continued from page 1—President’s Corner

Helped immensely with planned and even some unexpected expenses. Thanks to your input, we have acquired a lot of information about our town’s history. For example, did you know Hawleyton Road was once a toll road? Would you have tried to find a way to bypass the tollgate? (Some of the earlier residents did!

Do you have a friend or neighbor who would like to learn more about the town or receive our newsletter? Tell your friends and neighbors about the resources available in our society. One of the benefits of membership is having the quarterly newsletter mailed to you. Another is having a say in the direction we should be headed. Please encourage others to join BTHS. Together we can accomplish more!

The newsletter states, “We spend two hours a week, usually Tuesday afternoons from 1:30-3:30p. However we are flexible and are willing to trade some of those afternoons for evening and Saturdays for folks who work during the day. You might be able to spend a few hours, but remember the old adage “Many hands make light work.” Anyone interested can contact the Society members by email, via their website, or through phone numbers in the newsletter. Any help would be deeply appreciated.

While it's true that every aspect of our lives is part of what we become; for me childhood playtime is likely the biggest memory. As I became "officially" old at 65, the school age years are what I recall with the most fondness. Let's revisit them by season.

Spring signaled freedom (some things never change.) Coats were discarded, along with gloves and boots. Of course baseballs were busted out, but only for "catch" - till May. But the woods beckoned for "cowboy and Indian" adventures. Our favorite frontiers were the woods behind the fire station and the forest that ran from my house past the power line all the way to Shapley's. The creeks were a part of this as well. Part of the fun was sucker fishing by hand or sharp stick. Several "hideouts" were built, but a special one was in the tiny patch of woods over the creek from the ball field. It was here that we stored our treasures in heavy undergrowth. There you could find a discarded pack of cigarettes to secretly puff, a questionable magazine or two, and other contraband. Plus, we could spy on Haskell houses and the ball field.

Summer meant two things—baseball and swimming. The ball field was the magnet that pulled us away from family chores. Other than vacations or sickness we spent an average of five or six hours a day playing "real" ball, whiffle ball, kickball, or the pick-up game designed for neighborhoods who never had enough kids to field full of teams. Two batters tried to stay alive and avoid making an out. If not, everybody rotated from outfield to infield to bat. However, if you caught the ball on the fly, it was an automatic switch to batter. A lot was learned about placing hits to the empty field, and how to "read" where the hitter was likely to go. Alas, I can't recall the name of this game, so contact me if you can fill this memory gap. I fear kids today have missed this valuable experience of learning the skills of the game day after day. It was always followed by Kool-Aid and snack at one of the Haskells, or a soda or triple cone from Dunhams. The swimming was accomplished in many places. Brady's beach was the "cool" place



at Quaker Lake—complete with a snack bar. There were a few home pools, such as Hubners and Eldreds. The Cadillac though was the C.F. Johnson pool. On special occasions we would be driven down there for an hour or two. You knew it was the big time because you had to shower just to be allowed in it. Still, the biggest treat of all was "skinny dippin'" in the creek behind Dukes.

Interspersed with all this were sleep-outs. We had many favorite spots. Near the swimming hole was good if we wanted privacy. We often slept behind one of our houses if we desired food to be close by. The favorite spot was deep centerfield on the ball field. One night as we were telling the usual and speedily aim right for us. We were transfixed and felt certain we were about to be run over. The cigarettes and talking gruffly. This was followed by their laughter. It was my half-sister, Ginny Hyser and her friend, Jerry. They were returning from Brackney and wanted to scare us. They sure did! We didn't sleep there again—for at least a week.

For the dozen or so kids that grew up together in the fifties and sixties it was a phenomenal place and time. Next issue we will enjoy the fall and winter. Please note that what our parents didn't know didn't hurt them!

Binghamton Township Historical Society Membership / Donation Form

Membership is from September 1 through August 31.

Please circle one membership level: \$10 Individual \$15 Family Date Pd: _____

- My employer provides a matching grant (please enclose completed form)
- I wish to make an additional tax deductible donation of \$ _____
- This is a gift membership for the person whose name and address is below.
- Memorial donations are welcome & appreciated.
- I've added \$ _____ in memory of _____

Name or Gift Recipient: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please make your check payable to the BTHS and mail to:
Kenna Lou Mills, 3808 Brady Hill Rd., Binghamton, NY 13903

Thank you for your continued support!

Familiar Faces

Janice Brooks-Headrick

If you live away from your homefolks, you get homesick to see those faces you remember, people who helped raise you, people you went to school with, some since kindergarten. This summer, our SV High School class is having a big, BIG reunion. I'm not telling the number because you could figure my age. Shortly there after, we are having a family reunion. Recalling names is a challenge.

People I haven't seen for a couple of generations will be there. How will I recognize them? Facebook? DNA? Facial Recognition software? Nope. The old fashioned way; hardwired into our brains, reinforced with childhood training. Now, I'm at the other end of childhood. Being on the first wave of the Baby Boom, I can remember a couple of generations back in time. Now, a couple of generations forward I can see that you look like parents, grandparents, aunt, uncles, etc.

Remember the first time you looked into a mirror, and your parent was looking back?

Last Memorial Day 2014 weekend was a memory challenge. People I hadn't seen in 40 or 50 years were there. I was totally stumped a few times. It was more than a little embarrassing. After being

completely off base, one lady finally said, "But I'm wearing Mom's face!" I saw the grandsons of Miller Webb several times. Most are tall and bald. Another cousin, in a military uniform, with lots of medals, I drew a blank, until he grinned. The boy that I hadn't seen since 8th grade appeared. A lifetime friend was escorting a lady of Mom's generation. The older lady looked so much like the friend's mother, who had passed on, it startled me. That's when I met her aunt, her mother's sister. So it went.

If you've changed our hair, either by color or lack of it, I can usually figure that out. If your original teeth were remarkable, and have been replaced, maybe. If you don't sound like your from Upstate, probably not either. If your family hasn't lived in the Town of Binghamton for at least three generations, or I didn't know your ancestors, don't count on me to answer the question, "You don't know who I am, do you?"

Please introduce yourself by your maiden name, or childhood nickname. I may be the one passing out name tags. That's what I do at my husband's family reunions. It works for me!

Please see Page 8 for Society Officer and Staff contact information.

BTHSNL
Carol Stankevich
65 Sunset Drive
Binghamton, NY 13905

OFFICERS:

President.....Esther Freelove Pettengill
669-4151— pet10gill@gmail.com

Vice-President.....Phyllis Robinson Hawley
669-4186— genseek@aol.com

Secretary.....Frances Maxian Hibbard
669-4279— hibbardfran@frontier.com

Treasurer.....Kenna Lou Mills
669-4665— KLMills1124@gmail.com

STAFF:

Editor.....Michelle Fisher Button
724-1067— Editor.BTHSNL@gmail.com

Assistant Editor.....Maurice Howe
417-4069— maurice@stny.rr.com

Town Historian.....Judy Zurenda
772-0357 xt.17— JudyZurenda@aol.com

Reporter.....Margaret Banick Hadsell
235-3018 — Hadsell@TWC.com

Reporter.....Bill Cline
204-0193— wecline129@gmail.com

Mailer.....Carol Haskell Stankevich
222-5253— toasttipper@yahoo.com

Distant Guest Writer.....Janice Brooks-Headrick
cuznjan@juno.com

HONESTY is the first
chapter in the book
of **WISDOM.**

~Thomas Jefferson