



Binghamton Township Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Serving Past and Present Residents of the Town of
Binghamton, N.Y. and its Neighboring Towns

Vol. 7 No. 4

OCT –NOV – DEC 2010

The Binghamton Township Historical Society is dedicated to the preservation of the history of the region and its inhabitants. It meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 1:30 PM. from April through October in the Fellowship Hall behind the old Hawleyton Methodist Church located at the junction of Hawleyton Road (an extension of Pennsylvania Avenue) and Saddlemire Rd. just after the Park Ave./Hawleyton Rd. Junction. Visitors are welcome. Annual dues are now \$10.00 for individuals \$15.00 for families payable after September – start of our fiscal year



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.....Agnes Hogan Gabriel

1118 Conklin Rd.. Conklin, NY 13748

775-0066.....no e-mail

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor.....Esther McNeil Griffin

55 ½ Main St....Binghamton, NY 13905

(607) 725-9280.....Eltiemblo@aol.com

Reporters...

Agnes Hogan Gabriel 775-0066

Eleanor Maxian Haines..... 724-4535

.....erHaines9@aol.com

Joan Kenesky Moseng..... 724-8070

Margaret Hadsell.....669-4572

.....hadsell@attglobal.net

Officers for the Coming Year

At the annual business meeting in Sept. the Nominating Committee of Esther Griffin, Teresa Washco and Eleanor Haines proposed to keep the existing slate of officers for another year. The general membership agreed unanimously. We appreciate the officers' willingness to serve another year especially since we feel it is advantageous for our organization and its concern for the museum to keep the present officers in place for another year.





In the previous edition's article about the **Hawleyton Mudcats**, Gordy Hyser's original musical jug that's in our museum was not located until after publication.



instrumental in getting the school consolidation off the ground.

In Memoriam



Our town has suffered a number of losses this quarter. In September, Leonard "Mike" Donato passed away peacefully. He and his wife, Jamie, who died a few years ago, built one of the original houses on the Reynolds Tract. Our sympathies go out to their children, Bob, Tom, Lisa and Maria and their families.



In October, Nancy and George Yezzi lost their daughter, Beth, of diabetes. She was only 49. Such a sadness. Our deepest sympathies to the whole Family.

COMMUNITY SERVICE – A GREAT IDEA

Many of us knew and appreciated Larry Seeley who benefited our town as Supervisor of Buildings, Water, Grounds and Parks. He also served as a Broome County Legislator. Larry died in August of this year.

Fran Maxian Hibbard, Secretary BTHS

We lost a member of the Ward family, Mary Ward Murphy who was born to Thomas and Veronica Ward in the family homestead, the Ward Hotel, now known as the Brackney Inn. Mary was 98 years old and leaves five sons and their families.

For two Saturdays in July the Historical Society had the good fortune to have some thirteen men and women from the Broome County Correctional Facility as weekend workers. They had been committed to community service for their offenses. One of those Saturdays was brutally hot, but they continued to work without complaint on the property surrounding the old Hawleyton Church now a museum.

Another Brackney and Binghamton resident, Grant Sullivan died this August. We wish to extend our sympathies to his wife, Edna Giblin also a Town of Binghamton native, to his 5 daughters and a son, and to his brother, Stuart.

They named the ditch they dug at the woods edge of the parking lot the Erie Canal! They weeded and mulched the entire perimeter of the facility for a nicer look and easier mowing. Barely visible for years from overgrown grass, the walkways were 'unveiled' by the weekenders.

In August, Lillian Babicek Urganus passed away. Our condolences to her husband, Ernie. Lillian was very artistic, loved and cared for the earth, its plants and animals.

They painted the front and side doors red. After they scraped the deck, they painted any area that could be reached from the ground. (No ladder use was acceptable.) They painted the rear entrance, inside and out, and cleaned out all the window wells. To finish the job they edged the north side of the building.



At the end of September our former Susquehanna Valley school superintendent, Francis P. Donnelly left us at age 98. He was

The weekend workers were under the guidance of Deputy Jan McPeck, who was a definite example to them for being courteous, friendly and carrying out what was expected of them.

We were pleased and thank them for all their labor and efforts.



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NYS Vital Records Indexes

By Esther Griffin



Have you ever wondered just when and where your grandfather was born? Or you would like to know your great-grandmother's maiden name or when and where they were married. Perhaps when and where a distant relative died.

One of the most accurate prime sources is a state's vital records. Each state had its own starting date; New England states earlier and western states later. NYS began in 1880. PA in 1906. Some states are free with this information, even putting them on-line; New York State has been very secretive. In our state, there is a privacy period of 50 years back for marriages and deaths and 75 for births. (A person may obtain this hidden information from Albany for a direct ancestor with proof of one's relationship.)

While ordering the actual birth, marriage or death certificates has become almost cost prohibitive in our state, one does not always need to see the actual certificate to glean the information. The INDEX to the vital records gives the actual name, date and exact place of the occurrence. As an example though we live in the Town of Binghamton, if one is born or dies in a Binghamton hospital, those records will be found in Binghamton's City Hall.

Previously we had to drive to Albany to use the microfiche index, then genealogical libraries, such as Syracuse, Buffalo, Rochester and Elmira had copies. We have just now been able to obtain copies for the Historical and Genealogical Section upstairs in our Broome County Public Library on Court St. This will be staffed by **volunteers** and only on certain days and hours. (Mondays and Thursdays from 1:00 to 4:00 PM, and on Tuesdays from 4:00 to

8:00 PM.) We began this service on Monday, October 11th.

The state and local staff must apply stringent rules. One must surrender a driver's license or library card to use the fiches until they are returned. They may not leave the room or be photocopied and only 5 fiche at a time will be given each person. If more than two users, a 1-hour limit must be set for each of the 2 readers.

NY State started record keeping in 1880, but some towns kept records at different times. Here are some death records kept by the Town of Binghamton in 1870.

Coon, Little Lamb 1/12 born NY, died in April of inflammation of the lungs.

Milk, Emily L. 27 married, B in NY, D in Nov of typhoid

Cadden (Child) 1/12 B NY, D in March as weak from birth. Note: mother foreign born

Callan, Lucy E. 4. B in NY, D in Jan of scarlet fever Note: father foreign born

Callan, Wm.H. 1 B NY, D in Jan of scarlet fever. Note: father foreign born

Shuart, Mary 77, married, D in May of old age.

McLean, Charles 44, B in NY, D Jan of consumption. Note: he was a clerk.

Mc Loughlin, Margaret 8/12, B in PA, D Aug of dysentery. Note: Parents foreign born

Bedell, Nellie M. age 1, B NY and **Warren, Sally** 48, B NY, both D July of Scarlet Fever

Hanra, Wm. A 63, married, B Canada, D Sept of Erysipelas (Cellulitis) He was a farmer.

Temple Wm. Y 32 married, B NY, died May of consumption. He was a carpenter.

Austin, Wm. B. 3, B NY, D Nov - weak from birth

McCarty, Mary 40, married, B Ireland, D June of typhoid

Donahu, Honora age 1 yr., B NY, D Aug inflammation of Brain. Note: Parents foreign born



Murphy, Joanna age 1, B NY, D Aug of Whooping Cough Note: parents foreign born. (Page.3)

A History of the “Reynolds Tract”

(By Esther Griffin with help remembering from Leon & Marion VanVorce and Beverly Coleman)

In the early 50’s, Charles and Gladys Reynolds of Binghamton purchased a home and farm tract from a Mr. Callan. The Reynoldses tore down the old house, constructed a new house and built a barn on the location of the former house. Charlie kept a big area behind it and divided the rest of the land into about 16 R1 residential lots of approximately 100’ frontage and 300’ deep.

Other early residents were Don and Loretta DuMond (then daughter, Diane & Joe Nabywaniec) who built in the back row, next to the woods. Then the same year, Leon and Marian Reynolds VanVorce constructed a home next door to her father, and at the far end of the highway row, Clayton “Don” and Beverly Coleman built theirs and his parents built a two-story brick house next to them.

Frank and I, Esther Griffin were next, building near the end of the second row. We watched as house after house grew, Jack and Ceasie Flynn on our right and Mike and Jamie Donato on our left with Ina Alberts at the end. Bob and Betty Lindsley and the Stan Heslops in front of us, with Lew and Florence Taylor along side with Joe and Steffie Patrick next. Then we watched Pete and Kate Basti’s house being built in back next to Charlie’s farm, and Tony and Claire Fiato’s in the middle of the back tract.

Those were the original owners as we recall them. The houses have changed hands many times. At the death of the Reynoldses, Norval and Janet Wood moved into their house. VanVoces are still there, Sheila Lindsley now owns the Lindsley home. Stan Heslop’s house has sheltered many residents, Sognalians for a while, Jim and Ann Taft & others. Steffie Patrick still maintains her home. The Senior Coleman’s home has changed hands many times and Roger and Sandra

Haines owned it until recently. Alberts home was lived in by the Jim and Dorothy Zank family, the Gluckerts & others and now is the home of Ed Stevenson. Flynn’s home housed Jim and Ina Brownridge and then Ezra and Anna Avery. In 2006, our Griffin home was sold to Derek & Jessica Clement, and the Avery’s house to Mike & Jackie Matthews. Donato’s home was sold to Jack and Linda Humphrey many years ago. Basti’s house was occupied by Jim and Dorothy Bannon and is currently owned by Paul Boyd. & the DuMond/ Nabywaniec home is now Sandra and William Reiffler’s.

The addresses were changed from RD#2 to RD#2 plus a Box number and now just a house number. As the houses were numbered from Hawleyton Rd. up and around the Reynolds Circle, it was confusing to have an address of four digits on a road with 7 houses. I was once challenged at a bank when I gave my address of 1377 Reynolds Circle as the clerk said, “I’m sorry, Ma’m, I KNOW that road and there are only a few houses on it.” I said, “I know, but that’s how they numbered them. Go figure!”

This article is a farewell to one of the very first residents, Beverly Coleman, who has relocated to Florida. She and Don welcomed most of us newbies to the tract and were most helpful from digging us out of the ditches, to driving to town to lend us coffee! Our noisy bus kids were sheltered in their garage. Their mailbox has barely survived the many years and a recent accident with a truck, but it’s like such a sad little guy to hold the last of



Coleman's mail after some 60 years of service. (4)

One Town's Loss is Another's Gain

By Margaret Hadsell



Town of Binghamton's Vestal Hills Country Club Entrance

On a spring evening in April 1924, thirty businessmen organized the Vestal Hills Country Club over dinner at the Arlington Hotel. The club, to be located on the south side of the Vestal-Binghamton Highway, across from the planned neighborhood of River Terrace, later Rivercrest, would be built on land owned by prominent merchant and realty developer Archibald MacArthur.

Well-known golf course architect Alex Smith, who was "pleased with the land", was hired to lay out the course. With the basic layout complete, the construction of the fairways and greens was turned over to Binghamton architect C. Edward Vosbury who had studied scores of country club grounds. Offering his services for free, Vosbury accomplished the job at a low cost and in a very short time.

As the membership rapidly increased, so did the demand for a fully equipped club house. In order to hold real estate, the Vestal Hills Club House Corporation was formed and stock was sold to help finance the building designed by Vosbury. Archibald McArthur deeded 12 acres for the clubhouse site. Benjamin Welden of Sisson Bros. Weldon Department Store, Frank J. Boland, and many others contributed. Shares of preferred stock were sold for \$100 each and stockholders received dividends of 7% per year. Common stock sold for \$5.00 a share.

The initial plan was to erect one wing of the building that would open in October 1925. Interestingly enough the publicity pamphlet used to seek subscriptions stated that "the best of materials are

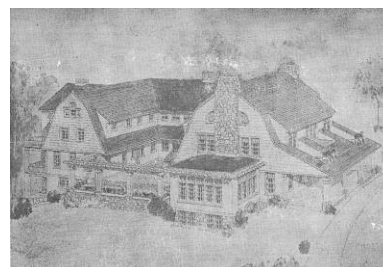
being used and the completed wing will be as nearly fire-proof as practical"...a fateful comment. At the same time, provisions were being made to extend the 9-hole course to 18 holes.

Thirty-one years later in 1956 the club, operating at a loss, was approached by Eastern Shopping Centers, Inc., developers interested in building a large shopping center on the site. The \$575,000 offer would make it possible to expand to an 18-hole course at another location. When the search for a new location began in the winter of 1956 and 57, noted golf course architect Geoffrey Cornish was hired to guide their selection. The Edwin and Florence Webb farm on Webb Road high atop Ingraham Hill in the Town of Binghamton was selected. Work began in the spring of 1957 to transform the barren hillside into a premier course.

During the fall of 1957, club members and their families were invited to a "rock picking party" where they spent an afternoon removing rocks from what is now the 8th fairway. Under the direction of Rudy Komacek, the course took shape quickly. Unlike the former course, the new one had water hazards and was the only course in the area with watered fairways. Construction of the clubhouse and an Olympic size swimming pool, begun in 1957, was ready for opening day on June 22, 1958. Over the next decade more than 4000 trees were planted and two tennis courts built. Meanwhile, the former 9-hole course was bulldozed to become the Vestal Plaza shopping mall with parking for over 3000 cars. After several small fires at the abandoned clubhouse, a large fire in 1963 burned the "nearly fireproof" building beyond repair.

Much has changed during the fifty-one years Vestal Hills has been in the Town of Binghamton. Only one farm (Edwards') remains on Webb Road and the well manicured fairways are now

surrounded by new residential development.



Indeed... Vestal's loss was Binghamton's gain.

Architectural view of Clubhouse . The left wing was the only portion ever built. (page 5)

The President's Corner Esther Pettengill

At our last meeting of 2010, October 5th, Rev. James Cline, a former resident of our town, joined us and presented the Historical Society with a book he has written called "The Descendants of Antonius Thonges Klein (Kline, Cline) and Allied Families". This is a valuable addition to our collection.

Our biggest concern is the building's roof (actually four roofs -- steeple, church, fellowship hall and kitchen). The roof is over thirty years old and we are indebted to Michael Peranich for patching it for us on many occasions over the years. Unfortunately, patching just isn't enough any more. With every severe storm we lose shingles and we find annoying leaks here and there. We have secured two estimates for replacing the roof, one for just under \$50,000 and the second for just under \$30,000. We have a third one in the works, plus we are seeking estimates for metal roofing.

Something has to be done to protect the building from further weather damage but since we cannot afford either of these prices we have decided to cover the roof temporarily with heavy-duty tarps. We hope to secure some kind of funding over the next year to begin roof replacement. If any of you have any ideas of how we can raise the necessary funds, please contact any of the people listed on the first page of this newsletter. We are here to serve as protectors of our artifacts -- important reminders of our common heritage -- and we appreciate all your support.

SPECIAL NOTICE to OUR READERS

We appreciate your kind remarks about the Newsletter (NL) since the first quarterly issue in 2004. The "President 's Corner" above explains that maintaining the Old Church which houses our Museum must be BTHS's funding priority.

We are grateful to people who have helped us with past NL costs and honor the recent "newsletter angels." We would like to continue sending non-members the Newsletter as a community service at no charge, but we just do not have enough regular

income to cover the printing and mailing costs for the more than 200 addresses sent each issue.

Starting with the next NL issue in 2011, we are offering 3 options if you want to continue to read the BTHS quarterly Newsletter:

Option 1. Join or renew a membership. Your \$10single or \$15family annual dues *include a mailed quarterly Newsletter.*

Option 2. Pay a \$5 annual NL donation to cover the cost of 4 issues @ \$1.25 an issue – *not a BTHS member, but entitles you to a print, mailed quarterly Newsletter.*

Option 3. No charge: *use Town of Binghamton website which carries the current Newsletter usually in color (click Historical Society Museum, then Newsletter); or use Broome County Library's periodical rack (2nd floor) which displays our current NL.*

We are asking you to decide on 1 of these choices before 12/31/10. If you are not a member, and you chose option #1 or option #2, send your contribution to Agnes Gabriel, BTHS Treasurer (see page 1 for address/phone). Remember, BTHS's annual year is September 1st to the end of the following August. If you are unsure about your membership status, contact Agnes Gabriel. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Esther Griffin, Editor & Eleanor Haines, Chair
Newsletter Committee



A Santa gift suggestion?

Old Time Remedies by Joan Moseng

When I was about 6 years old, my grandmother cooked up a cough syrup for a bad cough. Sounds bad but at the time I thought it tasted pretty good. Simply boil onions till the consistency of a thick syrup, add sugar to taste. It worked. Then a tried and true therapy for bee stings. Make a paste with dirt and water and and water, smear the bite area and let dry. Carefully (Page 6)

peel back the mud; the stinger will come out with the mudpack.

In 1939 when my parents were building our house and the cellar stairs had not been installed, my Uncle Paul said he would catch me if I jumped. I did one better and dove. As he and I landed on the unfinished rough floor, cement granules covered part of my face. Grandma did her magic by carefully cleaning my cheek and then repeatedly used cold steel knives to apply shaved yellow laundry soap. I never had a scar.

Editor's note: And how about Vick's Vapor Rub? Hot cloths were applied to the chest to open the pores, then Vicks salve was slathered on chest and neck, a heated woolen flannel pinned about the neck covering the chest. This had to be washed off the next AM before going outside to "keep from catching more cold." If a head cold, Vicks was poked in the nostrils and applied to the outside causing eyes to run. But OH! How well you slept snuggled in a Vicks haze of motherly love!

Is this Recession Like the Great Depression?

Eleanor Maxian Haines



As a small child, I lived on Town of Binghamton family farms. At age 5, in 1930, I started Grove School on the corner of Hawleyton & Maxian Roads. I walked (really) two miles to school. With no kindergarten, everyone started in first grade. One teacher taught 8 grades to 20 students in that one room schoolhouse. When I was 8, we moved to Ingraham Hill. There were only 13 students in Ingraham School. My mother, and both her parents, also attended this school. Usually we went home at noon, but in winter we ate lunch at school. Sometimes a mother would make scalloped potatoes or a kettle of soup. One day a small child brought a mustard sandwich. (Remember, it was the '30's...)

Helen Rockwell taught the eight grades. There were no teacher aides. Mornings Mr. Kelly, who lived next door, carried in a drinking water pail. When cold weather came, he built a wood fire in the big heatrola stove. An addition at the back of the classroom held the toilets. Rural schools did not have flush toilets, nor did farm houses where outside toilets were called outhouses.

It was the 1930's, the time of the Great Depression and large numbers of people were unemployed or at best working only a few hours a week. Times were very hard. There were no government programs to help people: no minimum wage and no unemployment insurance, no welfare, no Social Security checks for elders and the disabled, and no free breakfast or lunch at school for students singled out as poor. No one talked about being poor; we didn't know we were poor. Most farmers were fortunate because we grew



vegetables and potatoes, had cows for milk and butter and chickens for eggs. Once a year the family butchered livestock for meat, which we canned, like the harvested vegetables, in glass jars crated in a huge copper kettle on the iron wood stove. Water for the canner was hand-pumped at the stone-covered well near the back door, then hauled to the kitchen in galvanized pails. In summer we picked wild strawberries, blackberries and huckleberries. In season, the men hunted wild game, usually rabbit and squirrel, less often pheasant, partridge or deer, for our dining table.

In 1936 we moved to a small apartment on the South Side in Binghamton. Living there was much different from the big farmhouses with acres of land. The mixed European neighborhood, mostly second generation Italian, Irish, Jewish and Slovak, was all white; the only black person I knew was one boy in my 7th grade class at Benjamin Franklin School. Boys and girls dressed up for school, changing after school to save our good clothes. Some parents and their children spoke their native languages at home, but everyone was very proud to speak English in public. By the time our Franklin class of 41 students graduated 9th grade in 1939, school buses were provided for rural students but not for city kids; so we all walked to North Senior High. .

Restaurants were few; people did not have money to eat out. There were no fast food places like McDonalds, only scarce soda and ice cream shops like Talbots on Conklin Avenue. My folks made our root beer, hand-pressing metal caps on the glass bottles with an iron capper. My grandmother—a teetotaler—made dandelion and elderberry wine for the men in the

Pg. 7 (continued on Pg. 8)

**Binghamton Twnshp Historical Soc.
% Agnes Gabriel
1118 Conklin Ave.
Conklin, NY 13748**



Does Anyone Know the Whereabouts of a **Mary Thomas** in Naples, FL?
Her newsletter was returned from the address at 898 Egret Run in area code 34108. There are 12 Mary Thomases listed in Naples, and none at this address.

RECESSION ARTICLE (continued from pg.7)



family. Pizza, known as hot pie, was made by Italian families at home; there were no pizza shops. We bought groceries in small neighborhood stores. My parents went to work in Johnson City always a great cook, had earlier become very nutrition conscious thru the local Home Bureau, a national organized group of rural housewives..

In Binghamton from the Court House to the bridge over the Chenango River, Court Street was lined with big and little clothing and department stores. Walking Court Street on Saturday afternoon was popular with crowds of adults and youngsters—all dressed up—even women in high heels and hats. Some were shopping, some just walking to see who was downtown, much as young people do at the malls today.

At home, not everyone could afford even a party-line-phone; and cell phones like television, were yet to come. The entire family hovered around the living

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room radio, ensconced in furniture larger than today's bigger TV's, to listen to Binghamton's new radio station, WNBFactories—my mother as an EJ stitcher while Pa turned heels for women's shoes at the Vulcan Last. They left in their little coupe just after 6:00AM, returning at 4:00PM, provided they had a full day's work. On Saturday my mother and I cleaned with a newly invented Electrolux cleaner, broom, mop, etc. The laundry room was the kitchen of our four-room apartment, where we shoved in a wringer washer and separate rinse tubs to do the weekly wash. To heat the water for washing clothes, we lit the gas water tank with a big matchstick, then watched that the tank did not overheat and explode. There were no clothes dryers; we hung the wet laundry from our second floor back porch to dry on a pulley line, summer and winter.

So many changes have come to our way of living. I wonder what the next 50 years will hold for our children. I am a positive thinker, so I trust that our country's best days are yet to come.
(pg.8)



