

# OUT OF THE ARCHIVES

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## AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER ON CONESUS LAKE



### *The scandal that brought down a nationally renowned leader\**

Thousands of people in search of fellowship and inspiration gathered for a six-day Temperance Camp Meeting just north of Long Point in September 1881. An enormous tent was erected and steamboats and carriages made daily trips bringing spectators to "Temperance Beach" loaded down with smaller tents, picnic baskets, hymn books, and lanterns. The schedule of events listed family activities, gospel singing, and speeches focused on efforts to fight the chronic societal abuse of alcohol known simply as 'the nation's curse.'

With the exception of a downpour of rain the first night, the weather was perfect, and the massive crowd of campers was kept under control. Most well-known among the national social reformers was Eli Johnson of Brooklyn who kicked off the event on Thursday, September 1<sup>st</sup> with his lecture, "What we drink and how we make it." Susan B. Anthony followed the next day with, "Women's vote necessary to Prohibition." The camp meeting was considered a huge success. The Long Point House hotel nearby did a booming business by providing more comfortable lodging for Anthony, Johnson and other distinguished guests.

On Sunday, Eli Johnson repeated his popular program to the largest audience of the week. But in between the lectures, he was partaking in extracurricular activities considered unbecoming of a man proclaiming to be a devout Christian and devoted husband. The discovery of Eli's affair with a certain chambermaid at the hotel and his subsequent erratic behavior led to his precipitous fall from grace and speculation that he was no longer a teetotaler. His indiscretions that weekend on Conesus Lake became fodder for social columns in newspapers as far away as New Zealand. *Continued on page 7.*

*\*Details for this story were gathered from newspapers in the County Historian's Office and sources online. Research on the impact of the Temperance Movement is ongoing. Above: artist rendering by Bill Alden, 2011.*

## The Town Historian's Page



Sharpen your professional skills with these free workshops coming to our area!

### Appraisal, Selection and Acquisition for Small Archives Workshop - Tues, June 21st, 1:30pm

Presented by Dr. Preston Pierce, Regional Archivist for the Documentary Heritage Program. This workshop will cover the procedures and policies that should be in place for a museum, library or small archive (including town historians with documentary collections) to appraise, select, and acquire new documents and other material. Location: Livingston County Historical Society Museum, 30 Center Street, Geneseo.

### Town Historian's Summer Bar-be-que - Tuesday, June 28, 11:30 - 2:00 pm.

Location: County Park on Murray Hill. Bring a dish to pass. Meat, drinks, condiments and cake provided. Come and congratulate Sally Schmoldt on her retirement after 7 years in the Historian's Office! RSVP by Friday, June 24 to Amie at 243-7955 or [historian@co.livingston.ny.us](mailto:historian@co.livingston.ny.us)

### Managing Email Effectively - Wednesday, July 13th, 9:00—1:00 pm.

Learn how to identify records transmitted via email, distinguish records from non-records, file, maintain, and preserve email records, and much more! This workshop is intended for anyone interested in managing email records or in learning effective ways to send and receive official records. *Pre-registration required!* Go to NYS Archives web site at [www.archives.nysed.gov](http://www.archives.nysed.gov) and click on the "Workshops" and follow instructions. For more info contact Gail Fischer, Regional Advisory Officer (585) 241-2827 or [gfischer@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:gfischer@mail.nysed.gov). Location: Room 205, Livingston County Government Center, 6 Court Street, Geneseo.

### Linda Dodd: a volunteer par excellence



One of the most dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers the County Historian's Office has ever had, passed away in February. Looking back to the summer 2005 edition of *Out of the Archives*, I described Linda Dodd as "energy personified" because she was a lady who never seemed to waste a moment in the day. Her enthusiasm for nearly everything was contagious. Little did I realize how precious her time really was.

Linda was hired as a records inventory clerk in 2004 with NYS Archives grant funding. During that time she entered the massive Historian's library collection into a database and assisted in the move to Murray Hill from the Cobblestone Museum in Geneseo. After the grant ended Linda volunteered regularly and cheerfully took on any challenge. She entered thousands of veterans and poorhouse records into a database that now is accessible on the Internet. Accessing information for staff and researchers is no longer a frustrating chore thanks to her contributions that helped to bring Livingston County historical archives into the information age.

The absence of Linda's boundless energy and lyrical voice are sorely missed but her spirit certainly lives on around the County Historian's office.



## From the County Historian's Desk



*“For everything you have missed, you have gained something else,  
and for everything you gain, you lose something else.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson*

**T**his summer marks the seventh anniversary of the relocation of the County Historian's Office to Murray Hill and from inside and out, change is apparent everywhere. Outside the building, a handicap ramp is nearly completed and a new sidewalk from the back parking lot provides a level surface directing visitors right to the front door. In addition, expanded parking out back eliminated the sharp corner so cars can safely maneuver in and out. The bricks have been re-pointed, new bushes planted and soon energy efficient exterior lights will illuminate the darkness when days get shorter.

Inside new carpeting (actually a remnant from Building 1) has been installed throughout the downstairs. We now occupy whole house and in addition to the Public Research Room, there is a new Downstairs Study set aside for staff and volunteers to work on projects. The kitchen area got a bright coat of paint and provides a sunny spot to have lunch as well as extra meeting and storage space! This summer the 1st floor bathroom will be remodeled for handicap accessibility and the archival storage area will be reorganized to make retrieval of bulky items easier.

Hopefully the dust will settle after a few more minor updates and we can get back to “normal.” It seems like a lot all at once but it was time considering the building is 75 years old and remained a residence until 2002. Careful consideration has gone into each step of the renovation and I have advocated to preserve as much as possible of the character and charm of the structure built originally to house the main doctor of the TB hospital and his family. However, foremost the building must function efficiently as office space and to that end I believe there has been marked improvement. My thanks to Dave Allen, Laird Simons and the Central Services crew and to the Highway workers for their courtesy and the superb quality of work. Their professionalism is reflected in every detail. So, even amid the deafening sound of jackhammers, the rumbling of heavy equipment, and the smell of paint, the work of the County Historian's Office still progressed with minor interruption.

The office staff had undergone major change as well. As noted on the previous page of this newsletter, long time volunteer Linda Dodd passed away this year after battling cancer and Sally Schmoltdt, my clerk of almost 7 years retired as of June 3rd. Sally has been an immensely devoted employee and most often the first voice one heard on the phone or saw when walking in the door. Handling genealogists and trying to answer the never-ending ‘strange questions’ on local history takes special talent and Sally certainly honed her skills in that department over time! She worked on a variety of time consuming projects and was pivotal in re-organizing the Historian's research center. I will miss her daily presence as I am sure the Town Historians and others associated with the office will as well. But as she said, it was time. The good news is that Sally intends to come back and volunteer!

Thankfully, Mary Beth Bimber has agreed to fill the clerk position temporarily for the next three months. She is no stranger to the office having served as Deputy Historian from 1990 - 1996 and as an independent genealogist working exclusively out of this office since that time to date. I have full confidence that hiring her will allow for a smooth transition. Besides, it is summer, time to take it slow and easy right? Well not exactly! For me it's the opportunity to play catch up and do the spring cleaning that still awaits - that is, finish editing my book on the *History of Murray Hill*, work on a permanent timeline exhibit at the Government Center, process the dozens of boxes of newly donated collections, and tackle other projects too numerous to mention.

But first it's time to take a collective breath and go for a walk outside before the nice weather ends and the opportunity to fully enjoy the warmth and sunshine is lost!

## County Historian 2010 Annual Report

### **Program summary:**

The bulk of 2010 was devoted to expanding the historical records collection, community outreach and advocacy. These activities coincided with renovations to Building #5 that necessitated moving the basic operations of the County Historian's Office to Building #7 for several weeks throughout the summer and early fall. Access to the archival and reference collections during this time period was limited and posed challenges for the staff and volunteers to provide quality services to meet public expectations. Thanks to the dedication of the Central Services department and the ITS department, the County Historian's Office temporary location was well equipped and able to handle the busiest time of year without major disruption.

The ability to respond to history-related questions promptly and accurately remains a primary objective of the County Historian's Office and the number of requests has grown exponentially with web exposure. In 2010 the office fielded approximately 4000 emails, 1300 phone calls, and 400 visitors to the office. Additionally, numerous requests came from personal contact outside the office particularly as a result of doing more public presentations, collaborative community projects, and newspaper articles.

Several hundred local newspapers on microfilm from 1820s to the 1970s were digitized at no charge thanks to the generosity of Tom Tryniski, owner of *Old Fulton NY Post Card* website ([www.fultonhistory.com](http://www.fultonhistory.com)). Greater access to the archival and manuscript collections was accomplished in 2010 as more collections were arranged, described, and inventoried. More than 24,000 references were added to the County Historian's online records index including: County Poorhouse records spanning the 1870s – 1920s; 1855 New York State census records; deaths from 2010 newspapers; current soldiers in service, and much more.

Throughout the year clerk Sally Schmoldt capably managed the public research room, assisted visitors, and indexed numerous ledgers, scrapbooks, and entered thousands of references into the online index. Dedicated volunteers Mary Beth Bimber, Alberta Dunn, Nicole Menarchem, and Christine Thompson donated more than 400 hours of time to the office and willingly tackled difficult and time-consuming projects. Special thanks also goes to James Somerville and Jen Vogel for their assistance and to summer intern Ryan Hill, resident of Mt. Morris and currently a senior at Keuka College.

Among the year's highlights was the opportunity to serve on the planning committee of the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference on New York History in Ithaca, N.Y. in June. It was a privilege to be selected to present my research project *Documenting the Impact of the Vietnam War on Livingston County* at this gathering and subsequently in October to present it for the Hartwick College Department of History and Peace and Conflict Studies Program in Oneonta, N.Y. The reaction to both programs was overwhelmingly positive and re-enforced the reality that documentation of this era at the local, state, and national level has been lacking and must continue to be openly addressed.

Ongoing collaboration throughout 2010 with various government entities, historical groups, and individuals has strengthened the impact of the County Historian's Office immeasurably. This list includes but is not limited to: the Livingston County Town Historians, the Livingston County Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Director, WNY Landmark Society, the NYS Archives, and the State Historic Preservation Office.

As County Historian, it is my pleasure to share and interpret the history of this area with as many as possible. I continually look to the past for information, to the future for inspiration, and am very appreciative in present times for the continued encouragement of the Board of Supervisors, County Administrator, County Departments Heads, my staff, volunteers, and all those who value Livingston County's cultural heritage.

## **I. Office Management, Collection Development**

### **1. Preservation and expansion historical records collection:**

- a. The public research room contains approximately 300 subject binders accessible to researchers. The binders are organized by general topics pertaining to Livingston County and also by subjects related specifically to individual towns.
- b. The online records index now has approximately 160,000 entries including: veterans, deaths and marked graves, naturalization records, New York State census for Livingston County -1855 (partial), 1915 and 1925 (both complete), and poorhouse records.
- c. Other indexing projects in progress (not yet online): 30,000 entries from 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers; several 19<sup>th</sup> century business ledgers, church records and 20<sup>th</sup> century scrapbooks.
- d. Several hundred local newspapers on microfilm were sent to fultonhistory.com for digitization.
- e. Poorhouse records donated by Keith Hollis (approx 7 cubic feet) were arranged and described.
- f. Lee/Webb family (2 cubic feet) correspondence was inventoried.
- g. L. Warner collection was inventoried and includes: 54 farm diaries (1860-1918); 21 town assessor field books (1894-1910); numerous misc. documents.
- h. S.B Schull collection donated by Jane Schryver was inventoried and includes 60 diaries (1923-1984).
- i. William Hartman collection donated by Jane Schryver was inventoried and includes 49 diaries (1860-1932).
- j. Dept. of Social Services series (8 cubic feet) was inventoried.
- k. Levi Parson papers (3 cubic ft) donated by Linda Poste were inventoried.
- l. Finding guides were completed for the Lockwood R. Doty papers, Charles R. Cameron papers, and the Operation Morale series.
- m. Among the significant new donations to the collection are: 1) Approximately 5 cubic feet of documents from the former Craig Colony of Epileptics donated by the Groveland Prison, arranged, described, and inventoried. 2) 14 newsprint journals published in Dansville donated by J. Edward Jackson with articles written by Dr. James Jackson and Dr. Harriet Austin of Jackson Sanitarium entitled, "The Letter Box" (1859) and "The Laws of Life" (1866,1869).

## **II. Community Outreach and Advocacy**

### **1. Coordinated Town Historian's Quarterly meetings**

- a. April 13th – Sparta Church
- b. July 27th - Emergency Management Services building
- c. October 21st – Avon Opera Block
- d. December 15th – River Hotel, Mt. Morris

### **2. *Out of the Archives* newsletter**

- a. Two editions were published and distributed to all county departments, supervisors and town historians. All past issues are now available to view online at the Historian's web site.

### **3. Promotion of Historic Preservation:**

- a. State and National Register Listings: I met and communicated frequently with Robert Englert, Program Analyst of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and Cynthia Howk of the WNY Landmark Society. Together we toured many of the sites in Livingston County for consideration on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Site visits included: The Clara Barton House, the Lutheran Church, and the train station in Dansville, Caledonia Fish Hatchery\*, and several sites in the town of Sparta. With the assistance of Alan Mack, manager of the Caledonia Fish Hatchery, I prepared and submitted the National Register nomination for this property (listed March 2011).
- b. Historical Society programs: Attended several programs sponsored by various historical societies including: Livingston County Historical Society, Avon Preservation and Historical Society; Big Springs Museum in Caledonia, Lima Historical Society, Nunda Historical Society, and York Historical Society.

### **4. Programs, Public Speaking**

- a. January 30<sup>th</sup> – Gave presentation on the Livingston County Historian's WW II and Korean Veteran's Documentation Project for the Mt. Morris Dam Visitor's Center Winter Lecture Series. I also attended several of the other programs throughout the winter series that ran from January – March.
- b. February 5<sup>th</sup> – Attended the Genesee Valley Council on the Arts community arts grant award ceremony at the Government Center. Received a \$2000 grant to fund a music program by Howard Appell based on the film career of Hollywood actor Tom Keene, who was raised in Livingston County.

Continued next page

## County Historian 2010 Annual Report (continued)

### 4. Programs, Public Speaking (continued from page 5)

- c. March 11<sup>th</sup> – Attended the newly formed Advisory Council for the Center of History and Culture at Genesee Community College in Batavia.
- d. March 16<sup>th</sup> – Participated in BOCES Career Day held at SUNY Geneseo.
- e. March 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> – Hosted 84 Avon Central 8<sup>th</sup> graders at the County Historian's Office. The students broke up into groups and worked on using primary source materials.
- f. March 30<sup>th</sup> – Gave presentation at the Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation on Landmarks in Livingston County.
- g. May 12<sup>th</sup> – Gave presentation on the County Historian's WWII and Korean veteran's project for the Dansville Historical Society at the Town Hall.
- h. June 10<sup>th</sup> – Participated in the FAM Bus Tour sponsored by the County Tourism Office
- i. June 27<sup>th</sup> – Spoke at the historical marker dedication at the South Avon site on Rt. 39 in Avon.
- j. September 10<sup>th</sup> – participated in the Livingston County Farm Tour sponsored by the Genesee Valley Conservancy.
- k. November 10<sup>th</sup> - Attended the Tourism luncheon at Oak Valley Inn, Geneseo.
- l. December 4<sup>th</sup> – Gave presentation on the history of the County Poorhouse at the CNR in conjunction with the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the facility.

### 5. Research and Special Projects

- a. July 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> – Met with Jayme Breschard of the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council to provide assistance for a grant project to document culturally significant sites in Livingston County.
- b. August 25<sup>th</sup> – Facilitated a meeting between State Historian Robert Wieble, art curator Ron Burch, and others to discuss an initiative to raise funds to frame and exhibit 22 pastels Revolutionary War sites donated to the NYS Museum in the 1980s by the family of local artist J. Erwin Porter (1903-1981).
- c. October 28<sup>th</sup> – I presented the *Impact of the Vietnam War on Livingston County, N.Y.* to the Hartwick College Dept. of History and Peace and Conflict Studies Program in Oneonta, N.Y.
- d. December 10<sup>th</sup> – After working throughout the year on a collaboration with Tourism Director Lisa Burns, a new web link was unveiled at the Chamber of Commerce luncheon at the Quality Inn, Geneseo, featuring information on the Sullivan Campaign Revolutionary War trail through Livingston County.
- e. Conducted research for various history projects at: Rochester Museum and Science Center Library, University of Rochester Rush Rhees Library, NYS Archives, and NYS Library in Albany.

## III. Professional and Educational Development

### 1. Government Appointed Historians of Western New York

- a. Founding member, appointed treasurer (2008-2010), elected treasurer for 2-year term (2010-2012).
- b. Served on planning committee for Spring Conference in Batavia, Genesee County held May 8<sup>th</sup>
- c. Served on planning committee for Fall Conference in Ellicottville, Cattaraugus County held October 3<sup>rd</sup>

### 2. Livingston County Historical Society Board of Council

- a. Appointed to 3-year term (2009 – 2011)

### 3. Rochester Regional Library Council, Documentary Heritage Program

- a. Regional Advisory committee member (since 2004)
- b. Served on planning committee and presenter for the regional NYS Archives month event at Genesee Country Museum, Mumford, October 6<sup>th</sup>.

### 4. Conference on New York State History

- a. Served on planning committee and as presenter at the 31<sup>st</sup> annual conference held in Ithaca, N.Y. June 3-5.

### 5. New York State Association of Local Government Records Officers

- a. Attended conference Rochester, June 14-15<sup>th</sup>.

### 6. New York State Archives

- a. Attended workshop "Preservation of Electronic Records" given by Gail Fischer, Regional Advisory Officer, held at Hampton Corners, June 9<sup>th</sup>
- b. Attended workshop on preparing a Local Government Record Management Improvement Fund grant application

### 7. Association of Public Historians of New York State

- c. Attended annual conference in Buffalo, April 19<sup>th</sup>

### 8. Educational Courses: Empire State College

- a. Completed 12 credit hours. Studies included: *Nature in American History; Food and Drink in Cultural Content; and Social Change: Paradoxes of Progress.*

Respectfully submitted  
Amie Alden, Livingston County Historian  
May 4, 2011

**“An Affair to Remember” *continued***



Eli Johnson’s wife was Mary Coffin Johnson who served in a number of executive capacities within the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. The couple traveled extensively in the U. S. and abroad promoting the cause of temperance. However, Eli spent a lot of time traveling on his own and was often away from his Brooklyn home for months at a time. In 1883, two years after the camp meeting at Conesus Lake, Eli returned from a long absence to Australia and New Zealand. Shortly afterward he filed a \$100,000 lawsuit against a wealthy New York City grain merchant and esteemed member of their church for alienation of Mary’s affections. In turn, Mary also shocked the community by filing for divorce citing domestic violence. The “he said” “she said” reports and various detective findings were sensationalized by the press with lengthy editorial comments speculating on who was at fault.

Frederick A. Ward, a prestigious lawyer with a reputation for civility and ethics, represented Mary at the divorce trial. When the affair during the camp meeting was revealed publicly the news reverberated around the world. Ward summoned numerous witnesses from Livingston County to New York City to testify against Eli Johnson. Several employees of the Long Point House, a local Reverend, and even the chambermaid herself - Mrs. Alvina Annis (who Eli purportedly had an affair with) appeared before the jury. Mrs. Annis admitted to no wrong doing and gave calm explanations to all accusations against her character. The reason she said she was seen coming from Eli’s hotel room was that he had taken sick one night and she personally delivered his meals and he asked her to row him to Temperance Beach but others were around and nothing happened and so on. The defense attorney stated the closeness of the couple seen after midnight on the lake in a boat kissing was because Eli was only acting in a “fatherly” manner. The other witnesses contradicted the defense and despite Eli’s outburst that “it was all a lie!”, the “bald-headed” jury brought in a guilty verdict. Mary won and the judge demanded Eli Johnson pay alimony. Eli’s \$100,000 suit never made it to court.

Followers of the trial may have suspected the saga was over but Eli disappeared and many thought he committed suicide. He was eventually found alive but bedraggled, his life as a respected world leader over for good. Mary’s reputation was untarnished. She went on with her social work and published several books on her family as well as annually gave presentations for interested groups around the country on her meeting and conversation with President Abraham Lincoln. ■

**LONG POINT HOUSE,**  
Conesus Lake, N.Y.  
The Proprietor will not be Responsible for the Loss of Money or Valuables, unless Deposited in the Office.

TIME	ROOM	NAME	RESIDENCE
		<b>Tuesday Aug 30<sup>th</sup> 1881</b>	
9	11	Rev. Thos. Hall, wife, Washington D.C.	
		Jas. A. McPherson	Jersey City
9	11	John E. Hall, wife & daughter	Avon N.Y.
9	11	Austin Salisbury, wife	Phelps "
9	11	Mr. & Mrs. Chas. Rowley	Rochester "
9	11	Mrs. Mackay	"
9	11	Mr. & P. Kent	"
9	11	Mr. E. A. Elmer	"
9	11	Miss Payne	"
9	13	Eli Johnson	Brooklyn N.Y.
9	11	J. L. Wright	Rochester
9	11	Mr. Lip, Liveryman	Avon
9	11	Mr. J. H. Vogelaud	"
9	11	P. D. Hughes	Avon N.Y.
9	11	Walter J. Leonard	Rochester N.Y.
		<b>Wednesday Aug 31<sup>st</sup> 1881</b>	
9	11	John J. Downey	Ut. Mon.
9	11	E. H. Harnett	Avon
9	11	J. Harris	Fairville
9	11	Ed Harnett	"
9	11	Solomon E. Mulligan	Brooklyn N.Y.
9	11	Paul Couson	Dansville N.Y.
9	11	Leander Wright	Friendston

Above: Image of The Long Point House from the Livingston County Historian’s postcard collection. Also a page from the guest book in 1881 shows Eli Johnson’s flamboyant signature in the middle of the page and that he stayed in room number 13 two days before the camp meeting. Susan B. Anthony’s signature appears a few pages later. The book is privately owned and digitized with permission by the County Historian’s office.



Plowing the 'old-fashioned' way on Groveland flats, 1924.  
Livingston County Historian's photograph collection.

*Out of the Archives*



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