

Historical Society Newsletter



2023 WINTER/SPRING Volume 1, Issue 1

Fayette Historical Society PO Box 108 Fayette, NY 13065

UPDATE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The officers and trustees of the Fayette Historical Society have been quite busy over the last few months since taking over the leadership of the organization in October. We are encouraged by the large turnout for the annual meeting and the addition of so many new members. There is a great deal of work to be done and the board has been working diligently. Along with developing educational programming for our community, our society also has the important responsibility for recovery and preservation of our town's history and care for our building and collection. The archival material in the historical society building was in a compromised state when the new leadership team took over and required immediate assessment and ultimately removal from the building followed by extensive cleaning. It is now in a safe climate-controlled storage space. We received sound advice on this process from the generous folks at the Northeast Document Conservation Center in Massachusetts. Fortunately, the extended warm and sunny days of this fall gave us the opportunity we needed to do this work and although there is much more to be done, the process is well underway.

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The former Schaffer home on Poormon Rd. before it was demolished in November 2022.

Additionally, we had the opportunity to recover items from the former Schaffer home on Poormon Rd before it was taken down earlier this winter. The home was built in the mid-19th century and had been the home of the Schaffer family for several generations. Thank you to Kerry Martin, the new owner of the property, for giving us the opportunity to recover items from the house. For several weeks in October, we carefully explored and recovered items. Of significant note, a 19-century carpet loom was recovered and is now safe in storage. This important piece of Fayette history once belonged to Monroe Schaffer (1840-1918) who came to Seneca County in the mid-19th century. The loom was still in its original working place in a small room on the far east side of the house and offered a unique opportunity to gain understanding of looms in homes of that time period. A small ledger found in the home from the 1870's indicates the type of weaving that Monroe was doing for the community and many local family names are listed as purchasers. The recovered objects and material from the home will provide a great opportunity to study life in our township during the 1800's and early 1900's. If you have items or know of items of historical significance to our town or area, please reach out and let us know. We have safe and secure storage available to protect these important items.

The board has also been working hard to reestablish the legal foundation of the historical society. Much of this important work had been left undone over the years and required immediate attention as well. In order to provide for the long-term stability of

our society a very significant amount of time (more than 70 volunteer hours) has been spent in learning about state and federal requirements for reinstating and maintaining our society's status and filling out and filing the required documents. This involved items such as the extension of our organization's charter with NYS and our federal tax-exempt status and IRS filings. Although not an exciting part of the work of the leadership team, this was

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The 19-century carpet loom recovered from the former Schaffer home on Poormon Rd.



Sketch courtesy of Seneca Falls Historical Society

Voices from Fayette's past: The Kuneytown Schoolhouse

The Kuneytown school house was once located on the corner of Seybolt Rd and Kuneytown Rd and was known as the finest brick schoolhouse in the township. Today, the schoolyard with its stately maple trees is all that remains of this once beautiful building.

I live near the schoolyard and I remember as a boy riding by on the school bus and wondering what it might have been like to be a student there. Even now, when I drive by this schoolyard, I can still imagine the brick schoolhouse nestled in the shade of the remaining trees and children playing chase on the grass during recess. But what was it really like there? Fortunately, a voice from the past has reached the present day in this remarkably warm letter to the Seneca County Courier from July 1887.

I hope you enjoy it.
-Dale Freier Jr

Reminiscence of Kuneytown School Seneca County Courier July 27, 1887

Perhaps no reader of the Courier was as much interested in your correspondent Ross' account of the Kuneytown school picnic as myself, for it called to mind one of the most important events in my life and one that was full of good results to others. It is no secret that thirty years ago Kuneytown school had a hard name—as a most difficult school to manage, as low in scholarship and as having the poorest schoolhouse in the county. During the summer of 1861, I was driving to Lodi to procure a scholarship for Lima seminary, when Abram Flickinger said to me, "We want you to teach our school next winter." The request was a compliment and a surprise. He added, "You know the reputation of the school, we are so discouraged with it that we want to try you and if you fail we had better close it up. We have had such luck that we feel that money is about as good as thrown

away. If we were sure you could succeed, we would pay you more, but as it is we will give you eighteen dollars per month and board round." When I came back I thought I would try it, though I could have done better in salary elsewhere, as I afterwards learned. I went to Lima and remained until sent for to come home and begin the school. Having never been in the school I was practically a stranger to the scholars.

The eventful Monday came and I found the little old school house with its desks around the outside for the large scholars and smaller seats in front of these, without desks, for the little folks. At one end beside the door was a few feet of blackboard. The first thing that met me on my return home was, that someone had said that I had said, "I was coming home to thrash the Dutch," and there was some feeling at this which I met by assuring them that they were Germans and I alone was Dutch. The trustees had given me good advice and abundant sympathy, but with all I had great misgivings until I called the school, when before me were fourteen as clean, pretty, bright and well-dressed children of all ages from eighteen down to five as I had ever seen, and these were the first installment of the fifty-six.

I made a little speech to them about the work to be done, and the good name they ought to get, and then read to them some rules that ought to govern a school, and asked them to adopt them, which they did. As the days went by new scholars came in who were informed that these were the rules of the school, and not of the teacher. The school had just got started when the fall election came, and Josiah Hood came out to the school for me to come and vote for C. J. Folger for state senator—my first ballot. As the school filled up, I made up my mind that Kuneytown school could be man-aged but not bossed, and that no school in the county had better material than it.

The requirement of quiet was met, when with forty scholars my quartier watch could be heard at the stove. Someone warned me that the big boys would put me outdoors at the close of school some night, so to obviate that, I gave the school five minutes to get their things on, and then only allowed them to pass out one at a time, hat in hand, saving to me as I stood by the desk, "Good even-ing, teacher." Shortly after school began, I was asked if I talked German. I said no. A little after I heard some sharp criticisms going on and threats of what they would and what they would not do. I spoke to them sharply, when a more astonished group of scholars was never seen. "We thought you didn't talk German." I don't, but I understand every word you say. Once afterward I caught the same thing at home and serving it the same way, broke up this method of conspiracy.

The classification of the school can be seen by the fact that the pupils brought nine different kinds or editions of arithmetic's, two grammars, four geographies, two algebras. The plain statement of necessity caused the parents to buy one kind of books. A little urging put sixteen grammars and twenty-six geographies in the hands of the scholars. A constant appeal to their pride brought out as good work as one over witnessed. Excellent order in school hours and first-class deportment in the street, for then Kuneytown children must play in the road or on the little muddy corner opening into it. I made up my mind not to whip any scholars and I didn't, nor need to except in one instance. A young man taller than I was, determined to have a row, and he had it, but the moral sense of the other scholars and the firmness of the trustees in sustaining the teacher brought him into subordination and as I watched his life to its close as

well as I could, I was not surprised at the end. In the middle of winter, it being good sleighing, I suggested one evening that the school visit Auburn prison that week, and the very thought was the opening of a new era to the children. Many will remember that day — that fine procession such as only Kuneytown could turn out, the elegant morning ride to Auburn. When the warden came to inquire for the teacher, he joked [to] me about the size and age of some of the scholars, and laughed at me as being about the littlest one among them, remarking that is was all right, but when we had been through and were waiting to see the prisoners march to dinner, he again came and said to me, "You have the most orderly school and company of young people that I ever took through this prison." Of course, the school was told this at once.

The winter wore on and each day Kuneytown school was easier managed, until it actually managed itself. But the last day came and with it visitors and trustees. At the close of the school they thanked us for the winter's work and said they were satisfied and hired the old teacher for four months and a half summer school at the winter wages. As I was preparing for college I accepted the offer because it gave me time to study, which I did and recited to Rev. Jones, pastor of the Presbyteri-an Church. The first half of the school went quickly. The harvest vacation was just completed, when growing homesick at the thought of most of my boy friends going to the war, and I being left alone, though I had the use of only one eye on account of the partial paralysis of the optic nerve of the other and knew that I could not be drafted, I went to Canoga, Uncle George Randall enlisted me, and I went

to Geneva. The surgeon examined me, asked me if my eyes were good. I told him that I could see as far as he could, If he did not believe it try it on, when he said you will do, and passed me, and I was a soldier and there was a vacancy in Kuneytown school, which was filled with a young girl.

Soon after Kuneytown built one of the finest country schoolhouses in the county, and I don't wonder at the things that Ross speaks of. Often at work in the West, I think of the winter of 1861-62 at Kuneytown, of all its trials and victories, and then come the familiar faces of Abram Flickinger, the children's friend, of Long John Kuney who stood so tenderly by the teacher of John Abbott who, though not a trustee, gave words of wisdom, counsel and sympathy, of Uncle Fred and Aunt Keziah Hoster who, made me feel that their house was my home.

No teacher ever went into a school with greater odds against him nor with greater misgivings, none ever received more loyal loving sympathy from parents, none ever was made to feel that he was more honored of his pupils, and now that the shades of fifty draw nigh, and we look back over twenty-six years of busy life, full of joys, sorrows and successes,"Kuneytown school seems to have been the beginning of possibilities and through the years I have found myself praying, "God bless Kuneytown and those who remain of the dear people of a quarter of a century ago!"

And as in the winter I look into the faces of the hundreds of young people who attend my min-istry from this normal school and from high schools or business houses, I never forget to use the les-sons learned In Kuneytown in the long ago.

E.E. Clough Platteville, Wisconsin

(More to follow on EE Clough's life in the next newsletter)

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UPDATE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

necessary for our future and was treated as a high priority. At the time of this newsletter all necessary applications have been filed with supporting documentation and we look forward to soon reporting on the final determinations.

We have also begun recording oral histories from Fayette's oldest living generation. To start with, we have recorded several hours of interviews with Wanda Gaul and Howard Poormon Jr with the goal of securing their memories and lived experiences for future generations. These have been a most enjoyable and informative activity! We will continue to record these interviews and if you have any suggestions of individuals to be recorded or would like to be more involved with this project, please reach out to us. We would love to hear from you! These individuals and their memories are one of our most important local treasures.

One of the first steps we are taking in restoring our building in the hamlet of



The kitchen area on the west side of the Masonic Temple Lodge building in the hamlet of Fayette.

Fayette is the renovation of the kitchen area on the west side of the building. This area was chosen first as it can be safely sectioned off from the main building and used as a work area and archival space for our paper and book collection. Work has already begun on repurposing this space and once it is climate controlled, we will be able to use this space for hosting organizing meetings and to begin the important process of ongoing preservation of the items in our collection including

thorough cleaning, accessioning, and categorizing for ease of retrieval for study/research in the future. We would love to have help with these important tasks and will reach out when the work area is ready to safely begin.

There is a lot of work and planning being done by the board of trustees. This is an exciting time in the history of our society. We look forward to all that we can enjoy and achieve together in the future. -Dale Freier Jr, President

LOCAL HISTORY OUTINGS

The Fayette Historical Society looks forward to organizing a series of local history outings. There are many places of interesting and important historical significance right here in Seneca County. Often times these local places can be overlooked as we drive by them every day and are busy with the day to day necessities of our life. We hope by planning to visit them with friends that this will spur us all on to take advantage of these close by opportunities. Plans are to meet as a group at a set time at a local historic location for a tour/visit. For those who are interested and have the time, we will eat at a local restaurant together afterwards near by the site. As dates and locations are chosen, we will email them out and will post them to our Facebook page and website.

Message from the Vice President on the State of our Building

Hello everyone,

I hope the new year finds everybody warm and well. We have been very busy since October 1st. Many things have occurred in that time. I will concentrate on the physical building for the sake of my message. A new combination door lock was installed on the back entrance door, eliminating the need for an expensive lock system and keys.

We believe that we have found the source of the leak by the rear door. We are waiting for decent weather to remove the old eaves trough for further inspection to support our theories. The front doors to the building needed lock repair, and painting. They were removed, painted and the working parts were repaired. They are back on and in good working order now.

We have been waiting for NYSEG to reconnect the electrical to the building. Because the power had been off more than a year it was necessary to have a new Underwriters electrical inspection, and Jim Roloson has been helping us with that. One of our next goals is to bring the electrical throughout the building up to present day code for safety. We will be starting with the kitchen. Once the kitchen wiring has been completed, the area will be converted into our new multi-use area. It will be a meeting room, heated work area, and controlled atmosphere storage area.

We are just beginning with the many projects necessary to bring our building back, but with the support of our members and the community we have made a great start. I look forward to working with you all in the future. Please feel free to contact me with any comments, and or questions about F.H.S. or our ongoing projects at (607-351-3222) or hubbardjohnc@gmail.com
- John C. Hubbard, Vice President

PHOTO DROP from our Holiday Happening event on December 17, 2022.

Thank you for all that helped with cookies, raffles and participating in the contra dancing!

