



CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

May 2021

1 Fountain Street
PO Box 42
Clinton, NY 13323

315.859.1392
clintonhistory.org

Open
Wednesdays 1 – 4 PM
Saturdays 1 – 4 PM



Members of the Historical Society may vote for officers and members of the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting to be held via Zoom at 7 p.m. on May 17, 2021.

Members may vote by returning the proxy form on page 3 or by attending the Zoom meeting. The proposed slate of candidates may be found on page 2.

For the Zoom link, please email the Society at clintonhistoricalsociety1@gmail.com

Thank you Wade Lallier!

Rose Raymond

Wade Lallier is stepping down as president of the Historical Society this month to have more time to devote to his next book and to research the many areas of local history that interest him.

Wade has served as president for five years; however, his involvement with the Historical Society and his enthusiasm for history go back much further. He has memories of exploring the abandoned house on his father's farm and wondering about the family who had lived there. His interest in history was also fed by summer trips to the St. Lawrence River, exploring old forts and visiting Boldt Castle.

After high school, he graduated from Syracuse University. Although his goal to teach social studies never came to fruition, Wade maintained a strong interest in history. In the late 1990s, he and his family were living near Deansboro, and he developed an interest in the Chenango Canal. A library book with pictures of the location of the canal in Deansboro sent him on an expedition with his two young children. After that trip was unsatisfactory, he turned to the Clinton Historical Society for more information.



Wade became a regular visitor to the Historical Society, continuing his research on the Chenango Canal. He found a map of the canal and went in the field to locate as many of the locks as possible. He said he found this part of the research exciting “like an Indiana Jones moment. You’re going through the brush and there’s this big huge stone structure that has been abandoned and unseen for years.” Presenting a program on the canal was a natural outcome of his extensive research and collection. It was not long before Wade was asked to become a member of the board.

Wade first became president of the Society in October of 2016 upon the sudden

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WADE LALLIER	JOHN BRADY
PRESIDENT	PAM DENISON
ROSE RAYMOND	GIL GOERING
VICE PRESIDENT	PATRICK GRIMES
TIMOTHY FOX	PEGGY JURY
SECRETARY	MOE LALONDE
DAVID ILES	MIKE REVENAUGH
TREASURER	SHARON WILLIAMS

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Proposed Candidate Slate Annual Meeting

May 17, 2021

Officers (one-year term)

President	Rose Raymond
Vice-President	Patrick Grimes
Treasurer	David Iles
Secretary	Timothy Fox

Board of Directors (three-year term)

Tom Adams
Christian Goodwillie
Mary O'Neill
Sharon Williams

death of then-president Jerry Semchenko. Although not an officer, when asked if he would take over as president, Wade willingly did so. He said at the time, "I am going in cold, so don't expect miracles."

During his years as president, Wade oversaw the hiring of a paid staff person, the remodeling of the downstairs storage room, the initiation of an annual holiday ornament, the creation of a hall of fame, and the purchase of a new heating system. However, the one thing he enjoyed the most is History Camp, a summer camp for kids. He attributes this to it being a combination of his two lifelong interests—history and teaching. He is most proud of the increased participation and the inclusion of community partners such as Hamilton College and Clinton Pottery.

Wade has also been a great asset to the Society by presenting several programs on areas of local interest. These include not only the Chenango Canal program but also ones on Grover Cleveland, John B. Jervis, Ensign Robert O. Burns, and most recently the Tower Family of Waterville. Wade has also published a book on the Chenango Canal and is working on a history of fire departments in central New York. *Chenango Canal, The Million Dollar Ditch* is available for purchase at the Clinton Historical Society.

Asked for his thoughts on his years as president, Wade said "I like to think I made a difference. I got people to think about things. I think we moved in the right direction."

The board of directors sincerely appreciates the many hours Wade has devoted to the Society in his role as president.



Clinton Historical Society: Proxy Vote Form
Members' Annual Meeting, May 17, 2021

Members of the Historical Society may vote for officers and members of the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting to be held via **Zoom at 7 p.m. on May 17, 2021.**

Members may vote by returning this signed proxy form or by attending the Zoom meeting. For the Zoom link, please email the Society at clintonhistoricalsociety1@gmail.com
The link will be emailed once current membership is verified.

Members also may vote by returning this signed proxy form via U.S. mail or email. If you cannot attend the Annual Meeting, please return this form by **Monday, May 10,** by U.S. mail to *The Clinton Historical Society, P.O. Box 42, 1 Fountain St., Clinton, NY 13323*
OR

Return this form by email to clintonhistoricalsociety1@gmail.com

I, the undersigned Member of the Clinton Historical Society, do hereby appoint Michael Revenaugh (Director) and James Coulthart (Administrator) with full power to act for me and in my name to cast the votes which I have a right to cast and to act as my proxy at the Annual Meeting of the Members to be held via Zoom on May 17, 2021, at 7 p.m. and at any adjournment thereof, as fully as the undersigned could do if personally present as follows:

(1) Election of persons nominated to Board of Directors for three-year term ending May, 2024

FOR WITHHOLD AUTHORITY

(2) Election of officers for one-year term

FOR WITHHOLD AUTHORITY

(3) Upon such other businesses as may come before the meeting

FOR WITHHOLD AUTHORITY

Each member is allowed one vote. Unmarked, signed proxies will be voted for the election of Officers and Directors. The undersigned acknowledges receipt of the Notice of the Meeting and revokes all proxies heretofore given.

Name printed: _____ Date: _____, 2021

Signature: _____

If you are returning this form by email, simply retype your name here:

Britcher Fuel Co.

Richard L. Williams

Hundreds of people have run businesses in Clinton since 1787 when Moses Foote and seven other families started our community. One who made a big impact for over 50 years of the 20th century was Thomas J. Britcher, the coal and fuel oil dealer on Taylor Avenue.

Britcher was born in Clinton in 1891, the son of Lillian House and Henry Britcher, and attended local schools. He graduated from Clinton High School around 1910 and then Utica School of Commerce.

He married Mabel Suppe in Franklin Springs in 1914, and they had daughter Lois and son Henry. Mrs. Suppe died in 1937, and after that Britcher married Virginia Charsha and Edna Roberts.

Britcher's son Henry took over the fuel business from his father around 1960, but Henry retired in 1975 and other firms took over the accounts. The former Britcher parcel off Taylor and Utica streets has been mostly vacant and for sale for years. The coal silos have been dismantled as have some of the buildings.

Coal was big business years ago when it was a favorite, relatively inexpensive fuel to heat homes and businesses. Coal first came to Clinton via the Chenango Canal between 1837 and 1860s, then the railroads took over the coal business with the Utica, Clinton, and Binghamton Railroad which arrived here in 1866. Coal came via rail until the New York Ontario and Western RR went bankrupt in 1957. After then, large trailer trucks delivered coal to the dealers.

Coal dealers who predate Britcher include Henry Smyth of College Street, Horne and Brandis of Franklin Springs, and the Keith brothers of Clinton.

Tom Britcher started the fuel business on Taylor Avenue in 1922, now a reduced complex of buildings. He sold D & H and Lackawanna coal in 1923 and later sold anthracite, coke, and soft coal. He added masons supplies, wood, and fuel oil in the 1938 period as coal slowly declined as

the prime fuel. He became a distributor for Colonial Beacon, the predecessor to Esso and then Exxon oil products.

A coal tressle and coal silos were a big part of the coal business. Britcher had both. The coal tressle was where the coal cars were dropped off by the train. There the cars had chutes which opened and coal fell into trucks for delivery to customers. Britcher's and earlier Keith's coal tressle was just behind the Keith Block on College Street at Chenango Avenue.

This tressle, a long structure probably 150 feet long, was made of large wooden timbers with a tin roof. It was between Chenango Avenue and Don's Rok and just off the main line of the N. Y. O.& W. which crossed College Street there.

On his Taylor Avenue land, Britcher erected four 50–60 feet tall concrete silos on a large concrete base which is still there. The train cars full of coal would dump into a conveyor at the bottom of the silos and move the coal up. The smaller trucks would drive underneath, and coal would be loaded on the trucks for delivery to Clinton customers.

Like many businessmen back then, Britcher took a big part in many community organizations. He was a 60-year member of the Masons, a 62-year member of the Clinton Grange, a 51-year member of the Clinton United Methodist Church, a director of the Clinton Cemetery Association, a 49-year member of the Skenandoa Club, and a member of the Lake Moraine Association where he had a camp for many years.

Britcher kept his hand in farming and raised Aberdeen Angus cattle on his 103 Utica Road farm which he sold in 1958 to the Clinton United Methodist Church for its new church and parsonage. He also owned land on Brimfield Street and a home on Fountain Street.

Britcher died in December 1976 and is buried in Sunset Hill Cemetery.

Ask the Historian

Can you tell us something about Lee's Tavern on the Hamilton College campus now serving as the college's alumni office? (Jeanette)

Answer by local historian John Burdick

Although most people know the alumni building on College Hill Road on the Hamilton College campus as the former Root family homestead, this was not the building's original function. The Hamilton-Oneida Academy was established in 1794 by Samuel Kirkland, and in 1804 the Lee Tavern opened to accommodate visitors. Local builder Isaac Williams used traditional New England tavern design for Lee Tavern. When Jody Phillips wrote his 1980 Master's thesis for the SUNY Oneonta Cooperstown

Program in museum studies on the Phillips home in Franklin Springs (formerly the Barker Tavern), he found many similarities between these two early 19th-century taverns in our community.



former Lee Tavern

Readers: Send us your questions to be used for future Ask the Historian!!

What is it?

Thank you to for all of the guesses on the March What is it. We received more than a dozen guesses! Almost all of them were correct.

The first correct guess was sent to us by **Margaret Bornick**, who identified the items as wool carding combs.

We are going back to something a little bit harder this month. Do you have any idea what the item in this item was used for? Send your guesses to clintonhistoricalsociety1@gmail.com.

We will reveal its purpose and the name of the first person to correctly identify it in the next issue.

