

CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

March 2021

1 Fountain Street
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Clinton, NY 13323

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clintonhistory.org

Open
Wednesdays 1 – 4 PM
Saturdays 1 – 4 PM

Exploring the CHS Website: clintonhistory.org

Home

About

Collections

Resources

Join

Events

Blog

Support Us

Contact



Sharon Williams

A great way to entertain yourself and learn more about Clinton history is to explore the amazing material on the Society's website. Here is a short overview of some of the most popular sections to explore.

The tabs along the top of the home page indicate the website's main sections. The "Collections" tab is a good place to start.

The first tab under "Collections" is "Photo Gallery," with links to more than 3,400 photos from the Society's archives. Clicking on a single image brings you to information about it. You can search the photo pages with a particular



From the Photo Gallery, Kenneth Crane with his restored milk truck, 2012

topic in mind, such as Marvin St., or just browse through the pages.

The "Yearbooks" tab connects to the complete set of Clinton High School yearbooks from 1950 to 1989. Anyone who attended school in Clinton during these years will enjoy the memories the yearbooks bring. As Barbara Buckley Grimes commented, "It was great to look through the yearbooks to see the familiar faces of friends, cousins, and neighbors as well as teachers."

The "Hockey" tab connects to the comprehensive "Thank You Albert Prettyman" site, named for the legendary hockey coach Albert Prettyman who in 1918 started the Hamilton College hockey program and soon after hockey programs in Clinton. He later coached the bronze medal-winning 1936 USA Olympic team. A community-wide celebration of Prettyman's impact on the sport and the history of hockey in Clinton was held in 2018. The Prettyman site documents the more than 100 years of high school, town, and college hockey in Clinton. It has a host of material: photos, early videos, and stories from players, historians, and fans; details of high school, town, and college

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teams from the start of hockey in Clinton; and an interactive feature for readers to add their own stories about hockey.

Clintonian Andy Burns was the driving force behind the 2018 Prettyman celebration, which led to the Hockeyville USA title and this website. Andy was an inspiring person who loved his community, and we send our deepest condolences to the Burns family.

The final tab under “Collections” is “Research.” Members and nonmembers are invited to use the Society’s collections for research, either by visiting the Society or submitting a research request form to our volunteer researchers. The Research page lists the many resources available in our Munson Library, including maps, school and church records, and town and village records. Some of our most valuable materials are Samuel Kirkland land documents and Oneida Indian land deeds.

Additional material is available at the website, including a link to our recorded programs and information on upcoming events and exhibits. Clinton native and CHS Board member Gill Goering shared this thought on the importance of the site: “My wife and I are native Clintonians and, in fact, attended kindergarten together. The Historical Society website is a wonderful way to share our heritage with our kids and 7 grandkids who are spread around the country but still call Clinton their ‘home away from home.’” Each one of us can find reasons to enjoy this website and its valuable resources. Take some time to find your reasons!

Holiday Ornament for Sale



This year the Society continued its recent tradition of offering a limited edition, Clinton-exclusive holiday ornament. The creation of the 2020 ornament, “Fountain on the Green,” was a community effort. Clinton artist Tim Rand designed the image depicting the lovely sculpture standing atop our village green fountain, and

Clinton potter Jonathan Woodward created the ornaments. Other individuals helped with the preparation of the ornaments for sale. Board member Moe LaLonde coordinated the entire process.

The charming sculpture was donated in 1937 by the alumnae association of the Houghton Seminary. A brief history of the seminary accompanies each ornament. Thirty ornaments are still available at \$10 apiece. Come by the Society on Wednesday or Saturday afternoon to pick yours up.

Past programs are viewable on the Society's YouTube channel

CHS Programs

February 07

Architectural Styles of the 19th Century Clinton and Kirkland Homes, Part I
Richard Williams, Town Historian

February 21

Architectural Styles of the 19th Century Clinton and Kirkland Homes, Part II (including kit homes)
Richard Williams, Town Historian

March 14

History of the Tower Family
Wade Lallier, Historical Society President

April 11

At Home Deliveries in Clinton
Bill Huther, Clinton Resident

May 16

The Barnabas Pond House:
Two Centuries of Clinton History
Christian Goodwillie, Director of Special Collections, Hamilton College



David Garrett, long time Town of Trenton resident, presenting his program "The Amish in our Area" on Sept 13, 2020

All programs will start at 2:00 p.m. and will be presented live via ZOOM. Please email clintonhistorysociety1@gmail.com for the ZOOM log-on for the programs you wish to attend. The programs will be uploaded to the Society's YouTube channel approximately two weeks after each program takes place.

Ask the Historian

I am researching my great uncle John J. Downey (Mar. 2, 1874–Dec. 18, 1935). He was born in Waterville, New York, to Daniel and Catherine (Connery) Downey. He passed away at his niece's home Mrs. Anne Regina (Charles) Jones in Clinton, New York. His parents and other family members are buried at St Bernard's Cemetery in Waterville, but John is not among them. I have looked all over New York but am unable to locate his headstone. (Kathy Hari)

Answer by local historian John Burdick

John J. Downey appears to have been buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Whitesboro. I could not locate his headstone, but I confirmed he was

buried in the St. Matthew's section of the cemetery. Half of the St. Matthew's section consists of monument lots containing four, six, or eight graves, and this half is easy to search. Unfortunately, the other half of the section is single graves (sometimes two or three in a row), and many of these single slant markers are partially covered with moss or otherwise obscured. The graves of this area were sold in chronological order beginning nearest the road in the late 1920s. Graves from about 1939 occupy the row farthest from the road. With my camera in hand, I searched every one of the several rows but concentrated on the rows with burials marked in 1935. I never found a marker for Downey. There were several gaps in each of the rows indicating there must be unmarked graves. I suspect he might be in one of these.

How John found his answer

I began looking for any mention of a John J. Downey in Fultonhistory.com, an on-line searchable repository of New York State newspapers published between 1795 and 2007. My search yielded more than 2,000 hits. Of these, two items related to a John J. Downey who lived in Waterville and who died in Clinton. I found a letter he wrote to the *Waterville Times* from Illinois reminiscing about his early days in Waterville and his boyhood friends there. I also found a mention of him on page two in the December 26, 1935, issue of the *Clinton Courier*: "Bearers for the funeral of John J. Downey, held Saturday, were John Moore, Fenton Moore, Irving Hennessey, and Mott Flynn. Interment was in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Whitesboro."

To verify Downey's grave, I contacted Calvary Cemetery in Utica, which maintains all records for the diocesan cemeteries in this area

(Calvary and St. Mary's in Utica, Holy Trinity in Yorkville, St. Mary's in Clayville, and Mt. Olivet and St. Stanislaus in Whitesboro). Calvary confirmed that Downey is buried in the St. Matthew's section.

Can you supply some information about the Barnabas Pond House on Kirkland Ave.?

You are in luck. The current owner of the house, Christian Goodwillie, will present a program on the Clinton founder's home at the Historical Society on May 16 at 2:00 p.m. You can follow the program live via ZOOM or watch it later on CHS's YouTube channel after June 1. Check for details in the May issue of the newsletter.

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

Clinton's Founding

Dick Williams

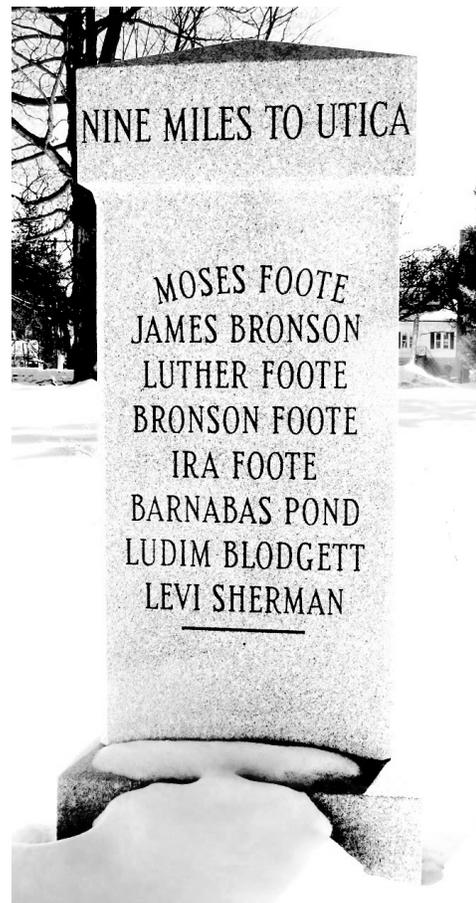
With no fanfare or notice, the 234th anniversary of the founding of Clinton occurs this month. Here, on March 3, 1787, Moses Foot (e) and seven followers from Plymouth, Connecticut, arrived.

They liked what they saw, stayed, and named their infant settlement Clinton in honor of George Clinton, the first Governor of New York State.

Who were these pioneers and what was their redeeming character that planted the seeds of the Clinton of today?

Let's go back to the Revolutionary War when seven pairs of brothers from seven different families from the town of Plymouth, Connecticut, enlisted in Capt. David Smith's command. This group was stationed during the summer of 1776 at neighboring Fort Herkimer, Fort Schuyler, and Fort Stanwix.

We can guess that they may have walked around this area on their own or explored it with the army. They returned home after the war and left again around 1785 and stopped in German Flatts, around today's Mohawk and Ilion.



Restless and wishing to find their own place, an exploring party came to this area. One of them, James Bronson, supposedly visited here in February 1787 and spent the night sleeping under the roots of an upturned hemlock tree in the park.

Capt. Moses Foot with three sons, Ira, Luther, and Bronson, his son-in-law Barnabas Pond, James Bronson, Ludim Blodgett, and Levi Sherman made up the initial contingent.

Crude log homes with elm bark roofs, no floors, windows, or doors and houses made of crotched stakes driven into the ground with poles laid from crotch to crotch constituted the first dwellings.

A street went from today's Kirkland Avenue to Fountain Street with two acres assigned to each family. Then clearing portions of their lands to grow crops of vegetables and Indian corn became a priority.

Speakers at Clinton's centennial in 1887 described Capt. Foot as a man of powerful frame, six feet tall, capable of great endurance, self-reliant, a natural leader, and a model pioneer.

He reportedly had native shrewdness and was a "great nervous force" able to control and sustain others amid the "vicissitudes" of pioneer life. He was 53 when he arrived.

Foot's first wife Thankful Bronson died in 1756, so Foot came here with Amy Richards, his second wife.

The early settlers were said to have perseverance, ingenuity, and "Yankee Pluck" to help them survive on the frontier.

They believed in God, in freedom of conscience, in liberty under law, and in schools to teach the truth and read the Bible. Patriotism was a common value, and they honored work and believed in personal purity.

One hundred years later, E. P. Powell said, "They were the concentrated grit and manhood of New England who struck the first blow of civilization in the virgin forest."

In 1847, prominent Clintonian Othniel S. Williams called the founders "wholly from New England, possessing the prevailing morality and staid habits, having the attachment of education, and being of Puritan origin."

Williams went on to state, "What in March was a wilderness, gloomy, sad, and cheerless, in October it began to seem like home, and even a child and the delicate woman, the longing for New England's rocky hills and happy villages, had grown faint and almost vanished before the attractions of this fertile land, and the mutual kindness and hospitality of these dwellers in the wilderness."

What tremendous and impressive role models our founding settlers were! Can present-day folks live up to the same spirit of cooperation, friendship, industriousness, hospitality, and devoutness to God that built a firm foundation for our village?

After 234 years, it is difficult to visualize what the pioneers saw when they arrived and the challenges they faced.

We owe them a great, sincere thank you for building our community on a legacy of hard work, piety, and mutual cooperation.

Hamilton Professor Hopkins speaking at the 1887 centennial commented, "Let's greet with an 'all hail' the century to come. And if the distant descendants of those who may gather here shall see that century close, may they see the sun go down in peace, a community prosperous, orderly, and happy still loyal to the tradition of their fathers and cherishing the blessings of liberty, intelligence, and religion."



LET'S BOWL

for . . .

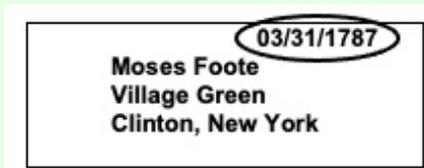
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A Word About Membership

Patrick Grimes

March is membership renewal month. CHS membership runs from April 1 through March 31. Included with your CHS newsletter this month is a membership renewal/donation card and a return envelope. Please take a look at the mailing label on this card. The date printed in the upper right hand corner indicates the end date of your membership.



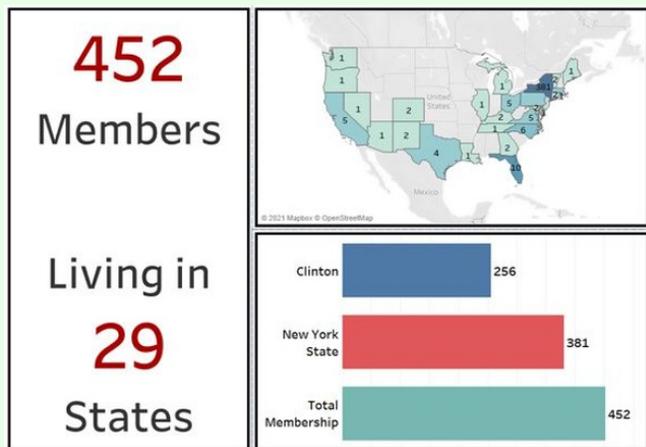
CHS appreciates the support of each member. Membership benefits include the society's redesigned newsletter, eight programs a year, free use of the Munson library, free research, access to permanent and current exhibits, store discounts, volunteer opportunities, and free access to Ancestry.com on the Society's computers.

There are several levels that our members take advantage of each year. In 2020 we had

Individual members, 33 percent; Family/Business members, 20 percent; Friend members, percent; Contributing members, 17% percent; Life members, 5 percent; and Partner/Professional members (local historical societies, libraries, and schools), 5 percent.

You can renew your membership two ways. Send a check with the renewal card and envelope, or use PayPal via the society's webpage: clintonhistory.org.

You may find it interesting to learn where CHS members are located. In 2020 we had members from 29 states plus two in Ireland and one in Wales.



What is it?

Thank you to everyone who guessed what January's what is it was. Unfortunately we had no correct guesses. The picture may not have done the object justice. In keeping with the Holiday Season (as in "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire"), it was a fireplace chestnut roaster.

How about the two items shown below: any idea what they are? Send your guesses to clintonhistoricalsociety1@gmail.com. We will reveal their purpose and the name of the first person to correctly identify them in the next issue.

