



# CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

November 2023

1 Fountain Street  
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clintonhistory.org

Open  
Wednesdays 1 – 4 PM  
Saturdays 1 – 4 PM

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## Clinton Central School Mascots through the Years

Mike Revenaugh

On September 22, 2023, the Clinton Central School District announced the selection of its new mascot: the Comets. The three-month process to pick a new moniker followed a unanimous vote on April 18, 2023, by the New York Board of Regents to prohibit the use of Indigenous team names, mascots, and logos by public schools. However, the push to retire Native American mascots is by no means a new one.



The seal of the Clinton Central School District

On April 5, 2001, then Commissioner of Education Richard Mills sent a memo calling on New York school boards to “end the use of Native American mascots as soon as (sic) practical.” In response, Clinton Central Schools divested itself of Native American iconography and symbols but retained the mascot Warriors. In January 2002, the *Clinton Courier* announced the Sports Booster Club would conduct a contest for a suitable replacement logo, which resulted in the adoption of the current school seal. These measures were insufficient under the 2023 orders, as guidance from the state reads “those districts that currently use, or previously used team names associated with Indigenous imagery or symbols must change their team’s name.”

Since 1952 the athletic teams of Clinton High School have been known as the Warriors, when the name was chosen in a contest by the booster club at the high school. According to the *Courier*, names were collected and narrowed down to four finalists: Bulldogs, Trojans, Olympians, and Warriors. The vote took place in high school homerooms. The Clinton High School teams were previously known as the Bulldogs. The *Courier*, in 1929, noted that a Chuck Burritt put into music a song known as “We’re a Bunch of Bulldogs.” The Bulldog mascot was featured in the 1952 edition of the yearbook *The Clintonian* with accompanying verse.



A Bulldog illustration from 1952's *The Clintonian*

We’re a bunch of bulldogs,  
Cheering our old high,  
We’ve got a team,  
Who’ll lick the world and  
All who ever try to stand up to us.  
We’re a bunch of bulldogs,  
Boston type you know.  
We’ll fight and cheer for her  
OUR OLD HIGH SCHOOL!

## CLINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, EST. 1962

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The 2023 name change was determined in a similar fashion. An online ThoughtExchange page invited local residents to share their opinions. From that ThoughtExchange, eight semifinalist names (Colts, Comets, Coyotes, Revolution, Terrapins, Wildcats, Wolverines, and Wolves) were whittled by public feedback to three finalists: Comets, Coyotes, and Wildcats. The final advisory poll was completed by paper ballot and open to students, staff, and registered voters of the school district. A total of 1,063 ballots were cast. Comets received 52.8 percent of the vote.

Recently, Superintendent of Clinton Schools Christopher Clancy said of the process, “[The board] was clear from the beginning that this was really a decision that they wanted to make sure the community and the members of the school district have an opportunity to participate in.” When asked if there was significant pushback against changing the name, Clancy said “I don’t think I got any angry phone calls, or nobody showed up upset about any part of the process.... We did try to give people an opportunity to share their feedback.” He added, “It

was an overall positive experience.”

Clinton is not alone in dealing with replacing its mascot, as the neighboring districts of Whitesboro and Waterville also used Warriors. Waterville announced in May 2023 that its new mascot will be the Eagles, and Whitesboro has begun its own community process to determine a substitute.

Comets as a team name has a rich history in Clinton. The Clinton Hockey Club was renamed the Comets at the opening ceremony of the Clinton Arena in 1948. In 1954 the Clinton Comets affiliated with the Eastern Hockey League (EHL). The team was a dominant presence in the league, winning the championship an impressive five times in nineteen years. The 1967–1968 Clinton Comets’ record was 57 wins, 5 losses, and 10 ties. The success of the team maintained a legacy of hockey that continues to this day. A recent example is the winning of the Kraft Hockeyville USA 2018 contest.



The 1967–1968 Clinton Comets

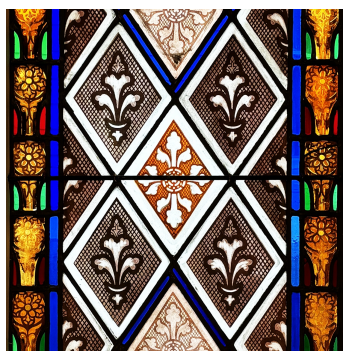
The Comets name gathered more local acclaim when the Utica Comets hockey team was established in 2013. The team selected the name in part to pay homage to the Clinton Comets. The Utica Comets have since won two division titles, in 2014 and 2022, and one conference title in 2014.

If you'd like to learn more about the Clinton Comets, the Historical Society's latest exhibit, “The Clinton Comets, 1948–1973: Celebrating 25 Years Through Pictures.” is currently on display through early 2024.

# Holiday Gifts

Local artist Gail Mosher has created three watercolor images of details from the Historical Society's beautiful stained-glass windows, and her work has been made into sets of notecards to support the Society. Each set, priced at \$20.00, contains twelve cards: four each of the three images. Also for sale are two etched-glass ornaments featuring design from the stained glass. These items are available at the Society while supplies last.

During the holidays, the Society features an offer of one box of notecards and one ornament for a combined price of \$30.00.



Don Henry, who restored the Society's windows in 2001, explained how the stained-glass windows were produced: "These windows are what I call stenciled, or "Grisaille" windows. Grisaille windows were lightly tinted windows using clear glass and paint. This was a more economical window, for clear glass is less expensive than colored. Paints are applied in two or more layers to yield the final design. Silver stain (silver nitrate) is also used, creating the yellow and orange colors. The stencil pattern is created and laid over the glass that has a coat of unfired paint, and a stiff brush "pounces" away the unprotected paint, yielding the stencil design. The paints, which are ground up glass powder, are then fired, fusing them to the base glass. Because the design can be repeated, these windows are more economical. Stenciled windows were often used in the more rural, less wealthy churches" (such as Clinton's Baptist church, built in 1832, now the home of the Historical Society).

## CHS Programs

### November 12, 2:00 p.m.

CHS joint meeting with the New Hartford Historical Society at the New Hartford Public Library. Speaker topic will be "The Utica Country Day School."

### November 24, 2:00–7:00 p.m. Shoppers Stroll

Mrs. Claus will be on hand to greet children from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., and the CCS choral group will perform immediately after the tree lighting. In addition, the Historical Society will offer holiday treats, decorations with the Clinton Comets theme, and the on-going exhibit, "The Clinton Comets, 1948–1973: Celebrating 25 Years Through Pictures."

### December 10, 2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Holiday Socializer for Historical Society members. Refreshments and socializing.

### January 14, 2:00 p.m.

Patty Louise, Publisher/Owner of the *Waterville Times*, presents "Big News in a Small Paper: Important Stories from the *Waterville Times* in the Past 20 Years."



Jeremy Katz presenting "Preserving Family Treasures"

If any program must be moved or canceled, members will be notified by email and by notices posted on the Society's website and Facebook page.

# Sweet Memories at the Clinton Cider Mill

Patricia Hogan

Autumn conjures up visions of colorful foliage, crisp mornings and cool nights, pumpkin-spice everything, and—if you have spent any part of the fall season in the Mohawk Valley—a sweet, delectable beverage from the Clinton Cider Mill. The cider mill has been a feature of village life for many generations, and multiple generations of just two Clinton families—the Wentworths and the Fehlners—have kept the cider flowing for more than a hundred years.

The cider mill began operations at 28 Elm Street in the early 20th century under the ownership of Herbert Henry Wentworth. The Wentworths, according to family tradition, began pressing apples for cider in Madison in the 1860s. Why the family moved the business to Clinton remains unclear; but, according to a November 20, 1969, issue of the *Clinton Courier*, H. H. Wentworth built his mill in Clinton with lumber from his own saw mill. Around the same time, Wentworth installed a cider press perhaps made in York, Pennsylvania, by the Monarch Machinery Company. Initially, the press operated on steam power, but Wentworth modernized the operation in 1927 with an electrical motor to work the complex mass of belts and wheels and pulleys. The same press produces the cider that fills the thousands of jugs the Fehlners offer today.

H. H. Wentworth passed the management of the cider down to his son, Herbert G., and he in turn passed operations down to his own son, Harold, also known as Red. Initially, H. H. struck a deal with Ed Benson of Whitesboro, for the apples he needed for his cider. In the late 1960s, Benson's brothers were still delivering 40 crates of apples once or twice a week in September, October, and most of November. In past years, the cider mill also ran custom pressings for local farmers and orchard owners who brought in their own apples to make cider and vinegar. Since the 1970s, local orchards and ones in the Finger Lakes region have supplied the apples.

After decades as master cider maker, in 1998 Red Wentworth sold the business to John and Mimi Fehlner, long-time residents of Clinton and happy customers of the seasonal business. The Fehlners carried on the business for some years, and eventually, they turned operations over to the next generation. Their son Ben took charge around 2006.

The making of cider at the Elm Street enterprise has remained pretty much the same for the past century. Apples arrive in giant bins and stop first at a machine that scrubs the apples clean. The apples are then elevated onto a grinder that mashes the fruit to a consistency of applesauce. The pulp is then spread on to a heavy cloth, which itself lies on a large wooden lattice. Up to ten layers of racks, cloths, and apples are loaded into the cider press. As the hydraulic press applies pressure on the stack, it squeezes out the cider which runs through filters and screens before it collects in refrigerated tanks. From the tanks, the cider is dispensed to thirsty customers.



The Clinton Cider Mill in 1998

Over the years, the uniqueness of the cider mill's traditional operations has garnered the admiration of many national and regional publications. The *New York Times*, the nationally distributed *Sphere* magazine, Utica's newspapers, and the *Courier* all featured articles about Clinton's best-loved autumn industry. Around 2007, the magazine *Saveur* included the Clinton Cider Mill as one of its favorite places in the country, calling it "The Crispiest Place in Upstate New York."

While maintaining the traditional cider-making process, the Fehlners introduced some innovations, adding in-store dining, hosting musical events, and expanding the cider-based offerings like popular slushies and hot mulled cider. The inclusion of cookies, muffins, and other baked goods, along with cheeses, apples, and maple syrup seemed to go together, too, like—well—cider and donuts.

With each delicacy, however, comes a delicious side of sweet memories.

# Window Hoods in Clinton

*Brendan Marris, AIA*

Fall's arrival reminds us of the importance of a hat or hood. A window hood, or pediment, is a distinctive architectural element visible on many residential and commercial buildings in Clinton's historical area. They range from simple cast stone or brick hoods to more intricate wood and cast-iron hoods. Initially having the purpose of keeping water away from windows, these elements became more prevalent and stylized during the Italianate period of the mid-19th century.



Although window hoods were made of wood, stone, or masonry, some of the most exciting ones to see are cast-iron pediments. The cast-iron window hoods on the McCabe block at 9 College Street and the Mills Block at 18–20 West Park Row, are exceptional examples of ornate prefabricated units.



The Allen's Hardware building on the corner of College and Williams streets has more intricate wood styling, while St. Mary's Rectory on Marvin Street has a good example of more modest design. Whether simple or intricate, window hoods add a sense of elegance and sophistication to many façades in the town. Keep your eye out for more as you explore.



# Charitable Contributions to the Society

The Clinton Historical Society is strong today thanks to so many generous supporters throughout the years. To advance the Society's important work, the board of directors invites you to consider making charitable contributions directly to the organization. These contributions could include cash and gifts such as historical items, securities, art, or real estate.

An additional way to support the Society is through Qualified Charitable Distributions. A donor aged 70.5 years and older can contribute previously untaxed assets from an IRA; this contribution would count toward the donor's Required Minimum Distribution. A qualified charitable distribution allows the donor to both benefit the Society and to

save on income taxes.

The board encourages you to discuss your charitable giving plans with your financial advisor and family. In addition, you may contact the Society if you have questions. Thank you!

ANNOUNCING FALL ENGAGEMENT

**DAVE TIMIAN**  
**And His Band**

Now playing at the SHADY GRILL, On Route Five  
Between Vernon and Sherrill

Every Wednesday and Saturday Nights

Sansone Brothers Phone: Vernon 14-F2



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## Curator's Corner

The best part of being the curator at the Clinton Historical Society is that you get to create the exhibits. The curator chooses what exhibits will be held each year and is primarily responsible for the content, design, and execution of each exhibit. Through its exhibits, the Society shares and celebrates the history of Clinton and the Town of Kirkland. Recent exhibits include Clinton's School Town era, the history of Clinton hockey, and a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Kirkland Art Center.

The Historical Society is in need of a volunteer interested in helping with this fun and rewarding activity. No experience is necessary, and all ages are welcome. All that is needed is an interest in local history, some creativity, and the ability to do online research. You also need a little free time, but much of the preparatory work for an exhibit can be



done at home.

In 2024 volunteers will also have the exciting opportunity to help present the first exhibit in our new bespoke exhibit cases made possible through the generosity of the late Frank Lorenz.

If you are interested in volunteering, please call (315) 859-1392 or email [clintonhistoricalsociety1@gmail.com](mailto:clintonhistoricalsociety1@gmail.com).