



# Historian's Bulletin



May 2017

Greetings Municipal Historians!

2017 is on a fast course this year – just when I think that things are slowing down and that I can take the time to sit down and put together a newsletter, then another project comes up and occupies all of my time. I have been busy so far this year with our cultural resources survey and as Records Management Officer, we have been implementing an electronic content management system and digitizing some of our inactive records to improve storage and efficiency of our records.

There are so many anniversaries to commemorate this year – Woman’s Suffrage, Erie Canal and World War I. Take your pick – I am sure that there is something that you can do as historian to commemorate one or all of these different events and the impact that they had on your area.

Also, please let me know if there are specific topics that you would like to see covered at some of our historians’ meetings.

Think spring!

Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar  
Montgomery County Historian/RMO



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## Notes from Historians’ meeting 8/29/16 - Nellis Tavern

Thank you to Ron Burch for opening the Nellis Tavern for our meeting and for giving us a wonderful tour of the 1747 structure. We had the opportunity to see the amazing stenciling restoration project that has been underway at the Tavern.

**Attendees:** Kelly Farquhar (Mont Co. Historian), Robert Carter (Minden), Earlene Melious (Mohawk), Eileen Chambers (Fort Plain), Mat Rapacz (St. Johnsville), Dennis Malcolm (Ames), Beverly Guiffre (Fonda), Barbara Alkinburgh (Nelliston), Karl Gustafson (representing Mont Co Exec, Matthew Ossenfort) and Willis “Skip” Barshied.

**Annual Reports:** Kelly reminded the historians that it is a good practice to do an annual report and submit it to your town or village board to let them know your activities for the year. It can be oral or written and a copy could also be sent to the state historian’s office in Albany (presently vacant).

**Cultural Resources Survey update:** Kelly indicated that the survey of historic resources in the rural areas of western Montgomery County is underway. Consultant Jessie Ravage has been photographing areas in the towns of St. Johnsville, Minden, Palatine, Root and Canajoharie to

identify any potential historic properties that could eventually be encompassed into historic districts. The survey should be completed in the spring.

**Historian Go-Around:**

**Mat** – A cemetery preservation group in St. Johnsville will create & update a database for burials in the village cemetery. Three-fourths of the village will be included in the historic district.

**Eileen** presented a cemetery tour in August at the Fort Plain Cemetery. She wrote a brief history of the village for the comprehensive plan. She is also organizing & housing in acid-free envelopes and folders, items from a collection of Doug Ayres letters that were donated to the Fort Plain Library. She will be working on a presentation for Woman's Suffrage with Micki Lieber for the spring, as well as an application to the Pomeroy Foundation for an historic marker for the Nelson Greene house.

**Rob** is involved with FEMA remediation for the Seward Crouse house, a Greek Revival structure that sat on the banks of the Erie Canal in Mindenville.

**Dennis** has a 5K Run/Walk scheduled for Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> for the Ames Museum. Anyone is invited to put up a table. He is also trying to locate any books that once belonged to the "Ames Academy" library.

**Skip** has been part of restoration of many places in this area for many years. He talked about Fort Wagner and its need for restoration. He believes that the building is older than previously thought. It would need lots of money to start any preservation efforts on that historic structure. He is also working with Old Fort Johnson to get his booklet, "Shoes for John" reprinted.

**Barbara** indicated that Nelliston is considering setting up a museum in the old school but there must be asbestos abatement prior to that endeavor. Town of Palatine is going to maintain the village cemetery.

**Bev** will put together a history of the Fonda Fair at the post office and she reported that the former Hotel Brunswick building will be demolished.

**Earlene** has been going out to survey private cemeteries in the Town of Mohawk and updating the listings. She is also researching Berryville for an historic marker as the Town would like to apply for one at the Pomeroy Foundation.

*Please send me information about the work that you are doing as a public historian in Montgomery County and I'll include it in upcoming newsletters. We love to share with each other the progress and success of our projects, as well as any difficulties. You can either send me a little note in the mail or by email to [kfarquhar@co.montgomery.ny.us](mailto:kfarquhar@co.montgomery.ny.us).*

**Next meeting scheduled for Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup> 2017 at Department of History & Archives, Old Courthouse, 9 Park St., Fonda, NY.**

If you've never been to an historians' meeting before, we would love to see you there! Please RSVP to (518) 853-8186 or email [kfarquhar@co.montgomery.ny.us](mailto:kfarquhar@co.montgomery.ny.us).



Presentation at Elizabeth Cady Stanton Symposium,  
March 18, 2017

### Woman's Suffrage in Montgomery County

While Samantha has discussed a broad view of the Suffrage movement, let me briefly mention the antithesis of suffrage, in other words, the anti-suffrage movement.

Given where we are in today's society, we take many things for granted including our voice as women. While suffragists were spreading the word and gaining momentum to have a voice in politics, business, etc. there were a great many who were opposed to that...

Anti-suffragists fervently believed women DID NOT have the right to vote. One would immediately think that this group who wanted to stifle women's voices consisted of men who did not want a challenge to their power and authority.

Who were they?? Primarily women with wealth, privilege and social status. They wanted to maintain the system that provided them with that privilege. Northern anti-suffragists were typically daughters or wives of wealthy bankers, businessmen or politicians. They were usually involved in philanthropic organizations that adhered to traditional gender norms.

Anti-suffragists espoused the tradition of domesticity, motherhood and femininity.

In her book No Votes for Women: The New York Anti-Suffrage Movement, Susan Goodier makes the case that, contrary to popular thought, women who opposed suffrage were not against women's rights. Instead, "conservative women ... encouraged women to retain their distinctive feminine identities as protectors of their homes and families, a role they felt was threatened by the imposition of masculine political responsibilities."

The anti-suffrage movement got its start in 1871 when the Anti-Sixteenth Amendment Society sent a petition to Congress. Over 5,000 signatures were gathered denouncing the vote for women. A group comprised of Catharine Beecher, Almira Lincoln Phelps (Emma Willard's sister), Mrs. William T. Sherman, Mrs. John Sherman & Madeline Dahlgren (wife of Civil War admiral) led the way to prohibit enfranchisement for women. Once they achieved this goal, they stepped out of the limelight.

In 1897, suffrage opponents organized to form the New York Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. By 1908, there over 90 members that produced pamphlets and literature explaining their opposition to suffrage. "The Anti-Suffragist" publication ran from July 1908 to April 1912 and was published by Mrs. William Winslow Crannell.

*In March, I had the opportunity to participate in the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Symposium in March at the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES. My co-presenter was Fulton County Historian Samantha Hall-Saladino and because 2017 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of New York State's passage of giving women the right to vote, we talked about the general history of Woman's Suffrage (and anti-suffrage) and our local participation between Montgomery and Fulton Counties. Of course, neither one of us could overlook two of the most significant suffragettes, both of whom had local ties, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, born in Johnstown, and Susan B. Anthony who taught school in Canajoharie prior to joining the suffragist movement..*

Unorganized efforts for anti-suffrage began receiving support from National Brewers Association beginning in 1881 along with meat-packers, railroads and mining industries. "All were convinced their profits were at risk if women had the opportunity to vote for reform legislation."

Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of Godey's Lady's Book was an ardent opponent of suffrage. With her magazine, she provided a vehicle for anti-suffrage supporters. Suffragettes were depicted as wanton, misguided, ugly and domineering.

The first national organization challenging the fight for women's suffrage, the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage was founded in 1911, gaining strength after 1912 it allegedly had some 350,000 members that believed suffrage would reduce women's work in communities & their ability to affect societal reforms.

Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), temperance lecturer, abolitionist and women's rights activist, would become one of the best known women in U.S. history. In 1846, she accepted a teaching position at Canajoharie Academy. Her years in Canajoharie represent a period of consolidation and growth just before she became active in public life. In Canajoharie, she developed a sense of herself as an independent person and a budding reformer, in the context of a loving extended family.

As headmistress of the female department, Susan B. Anthony taught from 1846-1849 in the building that stood on this spot. One cousin called her "the smartest woman in Canajoharie." Here she began her public career as a reformer, when she gave her first lecture for temperance on March 2, 1849. She resigned in 1849 to move to Rochester, where she lived with her parents and began her career in abolitionism and women's rights.

During her time in Canajoharie, Susan stayed with cousins, George & Eleanor (Read)Caldwell and Joseph & Margaret (Read) Caldwell. Margaret was pregnant with her last child so Susan helped her with household duties and caring for her young children. SBA's reluctance for marriage may have developed in Canajoharie as result of Joseph Caldwell's self-centered attitudes – she wrote her mother of an incident when during Margaret's difficult pregnancy, Joseph complained of a headache. After Margaret indicated that she'd had one for weeks, he countered that his was "a real headache, genuine pain, yours if sort a natural consequence." Susan was devastated when Margaret died a few weeks later.

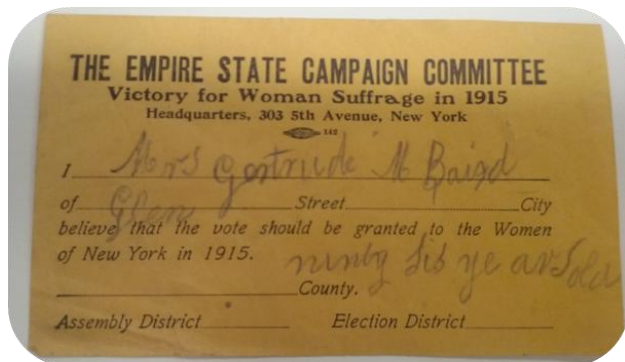
It was also during her tenure at Canajoharie that SBA realized the inequity of pay for female teachers was ¼ that of male counterparts. A quote from her first public speech in 1853 at the NY Educational Convention says "Do you not that as long as society says that a woman has not brains enough to be a lawyer, or doctor, or minister, but

has ample brains to be a teacher, that every man of you who condescends to teach acknowledges before all Israel and the sun, that he hasn't any more brains than a woman."

In June 1867, New York State held a Constitutional Convention. In late 1866 and the spring of 1867, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony organized lecture tours across New York State, promoting universal voting rights in the new Constitution, including suffrage for African American men and women of all ethnic backgrounds. On March 25<sup>th</sup> 1867, both ECS and SBA spoke at Diefendorf Hall in Fort Plain on the subject of 'universal suffrage.'

To recognize SBA for her achievements, she was honored with a U.S. postage stamp in 1936 and a coin in 1979.

Membership card - collection at the Dept. of History & Archives. It belonged to Gertrude M. Baird, a 96 yr old woman from Glen. She was a member of the Empire State Campaign Committee. The Empire State Campaign Committee was a coalition of organizations, including the Women's Suffrage Party, the Women's Suffrage Association, the Women's Political Union and other similar



organizations, headed by Carrie Chapman Catt. It was created to bring New York women together in support of the state woman suffrage amendment.

Local suffrage groups held meetings across Montgomery County in Grange halls, churches and theaters. Mrs. Allen Updegraff presented on the NYS amendment at a March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting at the Old Courthouse. Booths supporting suffrage were on hand at the Montgomery County Fair.

An article in the *New York Sun* in August, 1915 revealed that Suffragists were having difficulty making headway in Montgomery County.

“Suffragists here are making an active campaign and have been for a long time, especially in Canajoharie, three miles east, where they are being aided by Walter H. Lipe, one of the richest, foremost business men in all this section. No anti-suffrage association exists here, but many of the prominent women are opposed to suffrage, or at best disinterested.

Miss Ruth Dexter of New York is now here and addressing suffrage meetings in village streets and in rural districts in Grange halls.

There is every reason for believing that the vote will be large.

A suffrage meeting to organize a campaign committee in Fort Plain was held in the Wagner house on Main street Wednesday afternoon. It was attended by sixteen women and Miss Helen Farmer, vice leader of Montgomery County presided. Miss Eva S. Wock was elected town leader, after which Miss Ruth Dexter of New York gave a short talk on ‘Why the Women of Fort Plain Should take an Active Part in the Movement.’ “

Mrs. Erna von B. Owen lectured at Amsterdam that women were taking up arms and fighting side by side with their husbands in Europe in the midst of WWI, they were running the railroads, tramcars, cleaning streets, and working in factories, nursing the sick and making clothing for soldiers and caring for orphans, however, “voting seems to be the only dangerous thing we women must stay at home to avoid.”

The New York referendum was defeated in 1915 but passed two years later in November 1917. Ironically, Woman Suffrage amendment for NYS vote on Nov. 12, 1917 was voted down by men in Montgomery County with 3,016 voting no. The margin was narrow, however, as it was only defeated by 312 votes, primarily from those in the rural towns – “Minden men were particularly negative.” Hugh P. Donlon, Outlines of History: Montgomery County, State of New York 1772-1972 (1973)

*By Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar, Montgomery County Historian/RMO, remarks at the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Symposium, H-F-M BOCES, March 18, 2017.*

## Amos Clayton 1878 – 1942

*From Lorraine Whiting, Charleston Historian*

**Enigma, “Anything or anyone puzzling or inexplicable.”** The Living Webster Dictionary of The English Language, Chicago, 1971, page 326.

If one word was to describe Amos Clayton, it might well be “enigma”.

From 1942 to 2016, articles have been written about the life of Amos Clayton.

Born in the hamlet of Burtonville, Town of Charleston, he lived with his mother, Marietta, and grandfather, John Clayton. Amos grew up never knowing his father, and it is said that his mother never mentioned who his father was.

Amos’ great-grandfather, Peter Clayton, was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1750. Peter immigrated to



America as a young man. On January 25, 1777, while living in Paxton, Pennsylvania, Peter enlisted in the 10<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Regiment, serving three years. It is quite possible that a grant of land for his military service sent his family to Charleston, New York.

The 1880 Federal Census lists John

Clayton as head of household. Marietta was listed as “daughter”. The person hired to take the Census, and son of a local doctor, must have thought it was a good joke to list Amy Clayton as “Grand daughter”.

As a young boy, Amos went to the Burtonville School. He was known better by his nickname of Amy. Records indicate that Amy suffered from a speech impediment which some described similar to a machine gun blast, when he spoke, causing

children and adults to make fun of him. His clothes were ill-fitting. He was described as always wearing a cloth hat on his head, a long coat and wearing heavy black boots.

As an adult, Amos Clayton was a well-known figure in the Hamlet of Burtonville and surrounding areas. He carried a valise containing pins, salves, old newspapers and magazines, anything he could sell. As to the newspapers, Amy would say, there’s still a lot of good news to read. Amy walked wherever he went and was said to have a loping gait. Amy had an aversion to motor vehicles and it was thought that perhaps he had been hit by a vehicle, which made him keep to the ditches whenever possible when a vehicle went by. He walked wherever he went and was known in the neighboring towns around Burtonville. He would walk to neighboring farms, usually around dinner time, and was most always invited in for a meal. He attended many public events where he would play a concertina and dance for pennies.

With the death of his mother, Marietta, Amos was pretty much on his own. He continued to live in the house on Island Road in Burtonville he had shared so long with his mother. Neighbors would bring him food and help him as best they could.

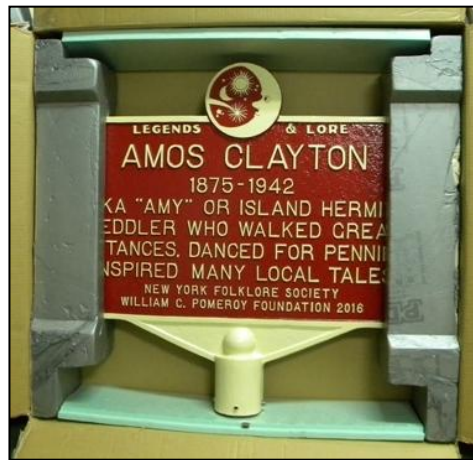
In the winter of 1942, Amy walked to Schoharie to see a doctor. From this, it is believed, he sustained frostbite of his feet. Sometime after that Amy was brought out of Island Road by sleigh from his home, put in a motor vehicle and driven to Amsterdam Memorial Hospital. On March 8, 1942, after a month-long stay in the hospital, Amos Clayton passed away. According to the March 10 and March 12 obits, the hamlet of Burtonville provided Amy with a funeral. It is believed that Amos Clayton was buried next to his mother in the family cemetery on the former Clayton farm, although no marker was found.

In 1997, a group of five Duanesburg high school seniors used a cleanup project of an abandoned cemetery off Barbin Road in the Town of Charleston as their final “Participation in Government” project. They received permission from the current landowners to go in, remove brush, and straighten the two stones they found. One was Polly Ann Clayton, wife of John Clayton, and Amy’s grandmother, who died in 1873. The other was Alexander VanValkenburgh who died in

1915, and was a Civil War Veteran. The last person supposedly buried in this cemetery was Amy Clayton.

An article in the July 25, 1999, Sunday Recorder, said that local Schoharie County stonecutter, Mark Swanberry, was hand-chiseling a stone to mark Amy Clayton's grave.

Time passes. There was a time when most people in Charleston would have remembered Amos Clayton, or had at least heard of him, or had come across some obscure article about his life. A long time gone but not forgotten, I wonder what he would have had to say about all this. I wonder if it would have made Amy smile.



(In Spring, 2016, a Legends and Lore historic marker, provided by the Pomeroy Foundation, will be installed in Burtonville, near Island Road.)

### Upcoming Events

- **Erie Canal Bicentennial Conference** – Fri. May 19<sup>th</sup> to Sun., May 21<sup>st</sup> Oneida County Historical Society, Utica & Rome – [eriecanal200.com](http://eriecanal200.com)
- **Fort Klock Living History event** – Sat., May 20<sup>th</sup> 10am-4pm, there will be a blacksmith, weaver, cooper, tinsmith, 18<sup>th</sup> c. music, sewing, 18<sup>th</sup> c. kids' games, kid's militia muster, Chandler, brewer, bread oven baking with David Manthey, and a medical surgeon with Paul Supley at Fort Klock Historic Restoration, St. Hwy. 5, St. Johnsville, [www.fortklockrestoration.org](http://www.fortklockrestoration.org)
- **APHNYS Region 7 meeting** – Sat., June 3<sup>rd</sup> 9am-2:30pm, Hyde Hall,
- **Minden History Day** – Sat., June 3<sup>rd</sup> 10am-4pm· Harry Hoag Elementary School, Fort Plain
- **3<sup>rd</sup> annual American Revolution Mohawk Valley Conference** -- June 8<sup>th</sup>-June 11<sup>th</sup> at Fort Plain Museum and Fulton-Montgomery Community College. email [info@fortplainmuseum.org](mailto:info@fortplainmuseum.org) or call (518) 774-5669
- **Civil War presentation by Appomattox Courthouse historian Patrick Schroeder** – Fri., June 9<sup>th</sup>, 7pm-9pm, Margaret Reaney Library, St. Johnsville
- **Legends & Lore Marker grant program** – June 30<sup>th</sup> & October 31<sup>st</sup> application deadlines – William G. Pomeroy Foundation promoting cultural tourism and commemorating legends and folklore as part of New York State history – call Christy at 315-913-4060 or [info@wgpfoundation.org](mailto:info@wgpfoundation.org)

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