

Otsego County Historical Society Newsletter



May 2005



FROM THE PRESIDENT

BUSY, BUSY, BUSY - That is the by-word for all the staff here at the Museum. We are on countdown for our opening on June 2nd!

Special thanks to Ann Wright, Roberta Hudson and Doris Schulz for their speed and their dedication to making all the changes within the Museum.

And they still find time to make changes in the windows to reflect Otsego County as it once was. Doris Miller has been very helpful working with Doris Schulz on our windows.

Speaking of the front windows, please check them out as they are changed frequently and we have been featuring a different Township each time it is changed. Watch for Charlton Township next time!

Looking forward to your visit at our Grand Re-opening on June 7th from 10 AM to 4 PM! See next page for details!

Ginny

2006 CALENDARS



The advertising for the 2006 Otsego County Historical Society calendar is coming in fast!

Have you been contacted yet to place your business ad in our 2006 calendar? If you have not been contacted yet and you would like your ad placed in front of hundreds of people that purchase our calendar, give us a call at 732-4568. One of our salespeople will be glad to visit you and take your order to help defray our cost of printing the calendar.

GRAND OPENING



On Tuesday, June 7th we are celebrating the beginning of our new Museum season. Mike Reling of the Oldies radio station, 101.5 will be with us for a live broadcast from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The first fifty people who visit the Museum on this day will receive a goody bag for free and reduced price items from area merchants. Refreshments will be served. Please join us on the 7th of June.

Volunteers have been working very diligently in the Museum, changing displays, painting and making the Museum look bright and inviting. I am sure you will be pleased with our new display on the One Room Schoolhouses of Otsego County.

Ann Wright, Museum Volunteer Coordinator

WALKING TOUR BROCHURE

Our new walking tour of Gaylord brochure will be ready soon. The brochure depicts thirteen sites of historic interest with narrations denoting their significance. The brochure will be in color thanks to our generous advertisers. The brochure will be available at the Museum, area stores, the Chamber of Commerce and the Information Center.

NOTICE



Thanks for the response to our request for yearbooks. Visitors find these books very interesting and spend time looking through them at the Museum. Even though we have some of these books we need more for all the schools. We are missing many years.



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

As of May 1, 2005 your Otsego County Historical Society has 175 members. Those of you who have returned as members year after year are the backbone that keeps our all-volunteer Historical Society humming along. A renewal form for the year June 1, 2005 - May 31, 2006 will be sent to you soon. We hope you will continue to support and encourage your friends to become part of OCHS.



Again, thank you for your support from the Board of Directors and myself.

Maureen Ballenger, Membership Committee Chair

SURVEY.... ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION


We are participating in a state-wide survey of one room schoolhouses coordinated by the Association. We will be one of the first counties to complete the survey! This is possible since we have been collecting information on our schools for the past year. We would like to be as thorough as possible so please send us pictures, artifacts, etc. of these schools. We will return all original pictures to you after we scan them into our computer.

We are also looking for any information you may have on these schools. On the next page there is a list of the schoolhouse names.

Thank you!



ONE ROOM SCHOOLHOUSES OF OTSEGO COUNTY

- BAGLEY TOWNSHIP:** McCoy, Pulaski (Meston, Weber), Salling
- CORWITH TOWNSHIP:** Ashley, Berryville, Bollinger, Boyle, Hill Road (Hilly Row), Menzies, Rush McGregor (Wertman, Riverside), School District # 8, School District #9, Sturgeon Valley
- CHESTER TOWNSHIP:** Big Lake, King, Palmer (Lewis), Wheeler, Chester # 2, Meodsker
- CHARLTON TOWNSHIP:** Fairgrieve, Heatherton, Waters, Sawyer
- DOVER TOWNSHIP:** Sparr (Dover # 2), Whitmarsh, Wolfe, Marquardt,
- ELMIRA TOWNSHIP:** Elmira #1 (Porcupine, Green), Elmira # 2 (Hallenius), Elmira # 3 (Shaff), Elmira # 4, Mount Jack , Fox
- LIVINGSTON TOWNSHIP:** Five Lakes, Franks, Logan, Pyke (Martindale, Pleasant Hill, District # 7) Murner, Poor Farm, Red School, Shields
- OTSEGO LAKE TOWNSHIP:** Gilbert (Marlette, Marlatt), Otsego Lake
- HAYES TOWNSHIP:** Choppins, Hayes # 1 (Fisher, Pink), Hayes #2 (Van Tyle, Lozen, Brick), Hayes # 3 (Swanson), Hayes # 4
- FRACTIONAL SCHOOLS** (serving more than one county) Gibbs, Huffman, McGregor (Wertman, Riverside) , Vienna, Rusnell, Rodgers
- NO TOWNSHIP LISTED:** , Burr, Dixon, Hurd, Klingensmith, Madison, Teeter, Van Buren
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THE SWANTEK BARN

Michael and Antonia Swantek (Swiatek) immigrated to the United States in 1883 and soon settled in Otsego County. They bought land on what is now M-32 East in Chester township and built a log cabin and other buildings. They bought the property from the Saginaw and Jackson Railroad which owned a lot of property in the area.

In 1900 Michael built the two story home which still stands today and is owned by the Russ Sofferidine family. Around 1905 the barn housing the animals and hay was hit by lightening and burned down. Michael and his family led the horses and cattle into some outside pens and so saved them from the fire.



Later part of the barn was rebuilt and after some time an addition was added on. That's why it was always referred to as the "old" barn and the "new" barn. There was also a large barn which held hay and straw as there wasn't enough room in the animal barn for all of the extra hay and straw. Pigs and chickens were also kept in this barn.

Michael and Antonia's children attended the Big Lake school. They attended a few years but, as many children did, they left school before they graduated from eighth grade. At that time, children were needed to help out on the farms and so often did not graduate from the one room schoolhouse.

Their son Walter bought the farm in 1918. He and his wife, Josephine, had two boys, Alex and Ray. Josephine died in 1921 and Walter married Jennie Dreffs. They had two girls, Reggie(Latusek) and Irene(Nienaber). Reggie became a well respected teacher and taught for many years at the Big Lake School. Irene and her husband were local business people. Walter's children were all able to graduate from the Big Lake school.

In 1965 Walter sold the farm to Reggie. Later it was sold to Carl Nelson who sold it to Bud Gottloeb, a local developer. He constructed a subdivision called Big Lake Estates on the land. The large barn was torn down. However, the farmhouse and some of the buildings were left on a small parcel of about two acres. This is now the Russ Sofferidine home.



The barn that was built after the fire still stands. It was built on a hill. The back of the barn (or first floor depending on the side you look at) was built with stone and cement. Wood was used for the second floor. The barn was painted red.

The lumber for all the farm buildings and the house came from Swantek's woods. The woods were cleared so they could raise crops. Lumber not needed for buildings was sold. In later times, the barn was re-roofed with metal.

MUSEUM STAFF

President-Ginny Brozowski
Vice-President-Doris Schulz
Secretary-Dianne Newman
Treasurer-Maureen Ballenger
Coordinator-Ann Wright
Deed of Gifts-Roberta Hudson
Memorials-Rhoda Kelso

DO YOU KNOW?

Who named the streets in Gaylord, specifically the streets named after trees (Maple, Oak, Elm, etc.). When were these street added to the city? If you know the answers to these questions, please call the Museum and let us know.

GINNY'S GEMS

*In summer children slam the doors
they left open all winter!*

MUSEUM HOURS

June 2 - September 5, 2005
10:00a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday Friday & Saturday

September 5 - October 30, 2005
10:00a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, Friday & Saturday

989-732-4568

Otsego County Historical Society
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