



THE SENTINEL

Vol. 26, No. 4

The Newsletter of the New Scotland Historical Association

Summer 2018

150 Years of Memorial Day Observation By Debbie Mahan

The unofficial start of summer, Memorial Day, has come and gone. The many celebrations and parades in the area were a wonderful way to honor the men and women who died while serving in the U. S. military and made me wonder when the holiday started.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, many state and local organizations were formed for veterans to network and maintain the friendships that had developed. Groups of men began joining the organizations for camaraderie and then later for political power.

The most influential of the many organizations during the post-war years was the Grand Army of the Republic, GAR, which was founded on April 6, 1866, on the principles of “Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty.” On May 5, 1868, the first GAR Commander-in-Chief John Logan declared that May 30 would be “Memorial Day,” also referred to for many years as Decoration Day. Logan also established that “Memorial Day” would be the day to pay tribute to all of the war casualties, missing-in-action, and deceased veterans. In the south, communities also observed “Confederate Memorial Day” in April.

During the decades to follow, observance of this day grew and became as important a day as Fourth of July. Memorial Day did not become a federal holiday until 1971, and it is now observed on the last Monday of May. Early activities to observe the day might be a gathering at the local cemetery with speeches and prayers, or supper and entertainment at one of the area’s picnic spots.

An article from the *Altamont Enterprise* on May 26, 1893 states the following:

“Decoration Day. The Helderberg Reformed Church will give a “Columbian Entertainment” at French’s Hollow on the afternoon and evening of Decoration Day (May 30th). Supper will be ready positively at 6 o’clock, and will be served throughout the evening. Proceeds for the benefit of the church. The Voorheesville band will be present.”

In May, 1956, an *Albany Times Union* article stated that “Voorheesville will observe Memorial Day with a parade starting at 10 a.m. from the school. District Attorney George N. Mayl will deliver the principal address in services at the War Memorial after the parade. Organizations and their auxiliaries taking part in the march include the Altamont and Voorheesville American Legion and VFW Posts; fire departments from Voorheesville, New Salem, Altamont, Guilderland Center and Clarksville; Mayor George Vunck and village trustees, town, school and church officials, and representatives of the Red Cross, the Army and Navy Union, Rebekah Lodge, Little Leagues, 4-H Clubs, scouting groups and the ambulance squad. Music will be provided by the Voorheesville Central School band.”

The Voorheesville Memorial Day Parade in 2018 was very similar to the one described in 1956, although the route has changed now. It is a day to remember and honor those who lost their lives in service to the country that has been observed since 1868; it is a part of our history that continues to bring the community together each year.

NEW SCOTLAND HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

We apologize for confusion on NSHA's renewing membership rate for 2018-19 which was incorrectly printed on the membership renewal form mailed out in May.

The new "Basic" rate is \$15.00, not \$10.00.

If you have already renewed at \$10.00 we will, of course, accept your \$10 payment for the Basic rate, as this was our error.

All new members who wish to choose Basic membership should pay \$15.00. Thank-you.

If you would like to become a member, please do so!

NSHA Membership Form

\$15 Basic

\$30 Sustaining

\$50 Patron

\$150.00 Life (per person)

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Make checks payable to NSHA.

Please send dues to:

Amy Heebner
NSHA Membership Chair
1403 Delaware Turnpike
Delmar, NY 12054

Mission Statement

The Town of New Scotland Historical Association preserves, protects and promotes history in the Town of New Scotland through the stewardship of material culture directly related to the town. The purpose is to promote an appreciation of local history, heritage and culture. through research, publications and educational programs.

President's Letter

For the summer issue of the *Sentinel* I always like to present highlights from my President's report from NSHA's May membership meeting. So here goes.

Museum

The Museum had 251 recorded visits from May 2017 through April 2018.

This year two new exhibits opened.

The Punkintown Fair "75 years and counting": The exhibit traces the Fairs first 25 years.

Women in New Scotland Politics: The exhibit celebrates the 100th anniversary of women achieving the right to vote in New York and includes a list of all women who have ran for town office in New Scotland.

Collections and Preservation

NSHA transferred collection items to new archival cabinets. The new space allows stored objects to be visible and reduces handling. Part of the museum's gallery space is being transformed into a research area.

The Association collected artifacts related to the history of the town and that can enhance its Museum's exhibits.

Some of the new accessions include:

Mirror in carved wood frame: originally hung in the Lake View House on the southern shores of Thompsons Lake ca. 1876. owned by Alice Hart Secor who requested the mirror be donated to NSHA upon her death 1867 letter addressed to Mrs. H.J. Sage that was postmarked four times in one day as it traveled from New Salem to New Scotland, South Bethlehem and then Coeyman's Junction. Donor Mr. Louis J. Picarazzi.
1935 wall calendar with lithograph of Holsteins in a field, calendar produced by Claude Quay and Sons,

Quality Home Dressed Meat, Feura Bush. Donor Tim Albright

Reproduction Anti-Rent War Flag. Donor John Anson.

Voorheesville Wildcats baseball jersey ca. 1950. Donor Bonnie Griffin

Group of mortgages and deed mid 1850's for property in Berne. donor Brenda Reiss.

Programs

NSHA had a full schedule of seven programs in 2017-18 that covered a diverse range of topics from the Early Days of the Erie Canal to Woman of the Schuyler Mansion to the Helderberg Madrigal Singers. On estimated 300 plus people attended programs from May 2017 to April 2018.

Historic Sites

Historical Sites Committee oversaw the repairs of historic markers at the Unionville Church, Presbyterian Church at Helderhill Road and Van Dyck house.

The historic marker at the Crounse House on Picard Road was destroyed by a vehicle in December or early January.

NSHA will attempt to recover the pieces of the marker and determine if it can be repaired or will need to be replaced.

NSHA participated in efforts to rehabilitate and determine the uses for the Hilton Barn.

Meeting Challenges

NSHA Board has revised the Association's Membership categories as follows:

Individuals/Families: Basic- \$15, Sustaining- \$30, Patron- \$50, Life-\$150.

Corporate levels: Basic- \$50, Benefactor \$100, Corporate-\$200, Other. Benefactor and Corporate sponsors and Other contributors over \$100 will have their names listed on the back page of **The Sentinel**.

NSHA actively provided information and communicated its concerns and ideas for the inclusions of historic preservation concerns to the Town of New Scotland Master Plan Update Committee.

NSHA cooperated with the Town and helped pay for the installation of a new security camera system in the Wyman Osterhout Community Center as well as the deployment of wireless internet access.

The Town installed new secure doors and locks at the Community Center and made additional repairs that addressed security concerns.

Alan Kowlowitz, President

A School for the Community: Part II

By Judy Kimes

The winds of change blow continually. The old wooden 1885 Feura Bush school featured in an article in the Winter 2017 *Sentinel* closed in June of 1928, replaced by the new brick school opening on September 11, 1928. Feura Bush was in a period of growth at that time due in part to the building of the Selkirk Rail Yards between 1920 and 1925. In her book, *A Short History of Feura Bush*, Judith Wing writes, “It is estimated that seventy-five percent of the people who lived in the village in the 1930s and 1940s were connected to the railroad.”

Besides being built of brick, the new school was also much larger, accommodating on three levels four classrooms, a play area (gymnasium), stage, and indoor bathrooms. During its early years, only two classrooms in the school were used for grades 1-8. There were 5 or 6 students per grade level. By the 1940s grades 1&2, 3, 4, 5&6 were utilizing all 4 classrooms, with approximately 15 students per grade.

In its early days the new school had an active PTA that frequently put on dances, card parties, and shows to raise money. The PTA would buy clothes for families who were in need. Many of the students walked home for lunch. However, the PTA would sometimes provide soup, sandwiches, fruit, and cookies at lunchtime. Norma Walley recalls that oranges were a special treat.

The Altamont Enterprise reported in its September 7, 1928, issue, “The Feura Bush School will re-open on September 11 in their new building. Mrs. G. Billington and Miss Ruth Relyea will be the teachers.” Mrs. Billington made the transition from the old to the new school.

Norma Walley, one of the primary resources for this article and one of the first attendees of the new Feura Bush School, shared her memories of her school days in an interview. When asked if she had a favorite school memory she told of how, from a young age, she would help out at the grocery store and gas station run by her parents, often hearing all kinds of jokes told by the customers. She would then tell these jokes to her teacher, Mrs. Billington, who would gently advise her on the appropriateness of repeating the joke to the general public. Certainly all children would benefit from having such a kind and wise teacher in their lives.

Now it is June, and if we think back to our school days this was a time of bright, warm days and, with the exception of exams, a more relaxed atmosphere. These photos, published in the June 16, 1939 issue of *The Knickerbocker News* and entitled, “Playtime at Feura Bush,” captures this mood. In addition to the *al fresco* activities in the schoolyard, at year’s end there was always an outing to a favorite spot. Norma recalls Howard Becker driving up in his cattle truck and everyone loading on to go to the creek on Lower Flat Rock Road or to the Vanderzee farm on Rowe Road for a picnic.

The “new” Feura Bush School remained in operation into the 1960s. However, in the early 1970s it experienced a new transition as recorded in the February 1, 1973 issue of *The Spotlight* with a photo and headline that read, “Friendly Feura Bush Landmark Becomes New Montessori School.” This use lasted only a short time. The school was then converted to apartments, and that is its function today.

There is some debate as to what happened to the school’s bell. In the photo provided by Norma Walley, one can see a bell in the belfry. In the photo printed in *Images of America: New Scotland Township*, and in *The Spotlight* article, there is no bell. Thanks to some digging by Lorraine Felter, another primary source and Feura Bush School alumna, the bell is believed to have been purchased at an auction of surplus materials from Ravenna Coeymans Selkirk School District (the school was a part of this district) by a Ravenna businessman who later sold it to someone else who, hopefully, found it a good home.

Sincere appreciation and thanks to Norma Walley, Judith Wing, Lorraine Felter, and Ann Houghtaling for sharing the treasure of their knowledge and experiences, and to Donald Slingerland for expertly bringing such clarity to some rather fuzzy old newspaper photos.

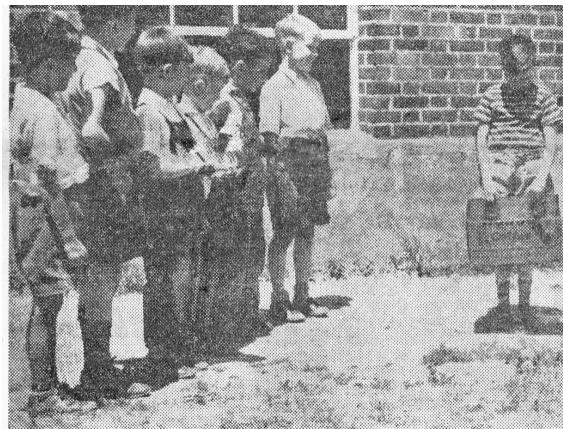
Photos published in the June 16, 1939 issue of *The Knickerbocker News* were entitled "Playtime at Feura Bush"
Thanks to Donald Slingerland



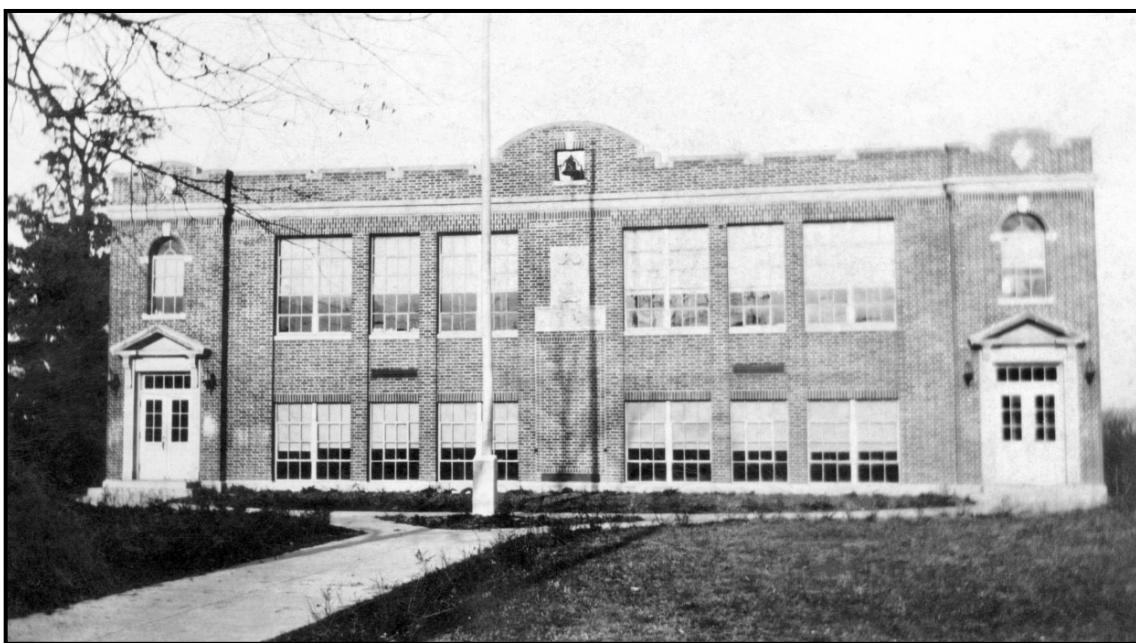
Quite contented as they eat wild strawberries which they picked near the school are Janet Barnes and Alfred Bushey.



A game of "ring around the rosie" is interrupted as we record the pictures of Peggy Vadney, who is in the center, and Harold Weekes, Sally Purrott, Emma LaFavour, Doris Koechlin, Peter Gudz, Mary Fisher, Joan Wagner, Nelson Crozier, Virginia Goyette, Cecilia Heere, Dolores Bushey and Ray Humphrey.



A game of bean-bag attracts Jackson McClellan, Ronald LaFavour, Gerald Tryon, Donald Tryon, Clarence Fisher and Raymond Purrott.



SUNSHINE'S CORNER

By Mary Beth (Frohlich) Felice

APRIL-MAY-JUNE

Fickle Spring is here. Oh yes, she's a teaser; gray days, forty-degree days, then BANG! A seventy-degree day, maybe two. But in April those warm days don't last. They just make you excited to go outside without a coat-and of course, catch a cold. It seemed to me that April was always a busy time at the office of the school nurse!

A big event for my brother, Richard, and me was our birthdays near the end of April. These celebrations were just 2 days apart. Oh yes, plus 6 years. We each had a favorite cake which mom created for us every year. Now in our 70's we still enjoy chocolate-pudding-nut for Rich and a plain nut frosted cake for me. Oh boy-2 cakes 2 days apart!



Springtime was always time for events like picnics, prom, garden visits in Albany and the opening of baseball season. Things moved quickly into summer and the annual July Fourth celebration.

The parade began at the school (now Elementary School) and rolled down Maple Avenue to Voorheesville Avenue to a park behind the Legion Hall. All sorts of goings on occurred there- games of chance, music and Fireworks at dark. Big doins' in the Village of Voorheesville.



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As we rolled into summer our favorite (and only) drive-in movie opened. Indian Ladder Drive-In on New Scotland Road, aka Route 85, was a choice spot for weekend activities. If it was hot enough (outside the car) we would sit outside on lawn chairs and enjoy the film and the company.

A trip across the street brought us to a little eatery called Neal's Drive-In, owned by Chet and Sally Neal. My absolute favorite there was the fried clam sandwich or basket. Yum! Sandwiches and sodas were carted back across the street to our spot at the outdoor theater. What a life!

When the Methodist Church in the center of Voorheesville closed for renovations one summer, services were held at that same drive-in. Folks parked and put the speakers in their car window. The choir and piano were on a flat-bed truck near the projection booth. A beautiful, big birch-bark cross put us in the proper mood. The minister came complete with lectern and microphone. It was an awesome service out in God's beautiful country.

Many summer activities were held at Picard's Grove on – wait for it- Picard Road. Cook-outs, clam bakes and all manner of summer parties occurred at the "Grove." At the foot of the Helderbergs it was just a perfect spot.

Besides exams, dances and prom, Senior Class play, etc., June was a winding down time. I strongly remember how sad we all felt as we lined up for the graduation processional. It was truly a case of endings and beginnings as we left the small-town life of Voorheesville and stepped out into the unknown; jobs, tech schools, university, military, marriage.

Thank-you, Voorheesville, for sending us on our way.





Top Photo: An early version of a parade float made by the International Order of Odd Fellows
Below: Photos from Voorheesville Memorial Day Parade 2018

MUSEUM UPDATE
The Museum will be closed until early July
while volunteers update the exhibit.

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Museum Hours

The museum is
open year-round
on Sunday
from
2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.
Handicap Accessible

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