



Allegany Area Historical Association

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www.allegany.org

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope this newsletter finds you all safe. Hopefully things will be back to some sort of normal by the time you get this. I know that "normal" will take a long time.

Due to ongoing concerns regarding Covid-19, it has been decided that AAHA will NOT be reopening for the rest of the year. There will be no open Wednesdays this summer, no fall programs or meetings and no Christmas cookie sale or community Christmas service. However, we will continue to send out our newsletter as usual, and we will accept one-on-one requests for anyone needing to visit the Center for information. Please message us on our Facebook page or email us at AlleganyHeritageCenter@gmail.com for an appointment. Since we are not having our Community Christmas service, and will not be collecting for area food pantries, we urge you to contribute to the food pantry of your choice.

Long-time area resident, George Schreiber, Jr., will celebrate his 100th birthday on October 9th. He is currently a resident of The Pines of Olean, and I know he would appreciate cards on this grand occasion. His address is: George Schreiber, The Pines of Olean B-19W, 2245 West State Street, Olean, New York 14760. Elsewhere in this issue, we are re-printing his oral history done in 2013. George was like so many others in that he led an ordinary life until WW II intervened. He went into Europe on D-Day plus one, served until 1945, came home and picked up his life again.

Celestine Welch, a long-time resident, passed away on May 13th. In 2012, I interviewed Celestine and we published her oral history in our newsletter. Elsewhere in this issue, we are re-printing this history in her memory. Celestine always had a smile on her face. Her daughter, Jeannie Davis, would bring Celestine each year to the cookie sale and Celestine would stay out in the car while Jeannie shopped. So I would go out to the car to talk to her. What a delight to see her each year. She always wanted to know what was going on with the historical association. You can read her full obituary at the Casey, Halwig and Hartle Funeral Home web site.

To get exercise, I have been walking on the campus at St. Bonaventure. It's a lovely place to walk and I keep finding new things. On the north side of Devereux Hall – the dorm closest to Route 417 – the one with the arch in the middle – my son told me about some round plaques between the second and third floors. From east to west the plaques say "Bolivar, Portville, Olean, Allegany, Salamanca, Ellicottville, Bradford." There is a different design on each plaque. There are many plaques on the campus buildings but they are usually of religious people. I thought these were very unusual. Check them out if you have time.

Francie Potter, President

One of our newer members, Wes Martin, has volunteered to do interviews with some of the older people in the area to capture their stories before it is too late. In January Wes did a series of interviews with 92 year old George Schreiber, Jr. We hope you like it.

George's father, George Schreiber, came to America from central Germany in 1906 and lived on the farm of his Uncle Simon Schussele and Aunt Christine Louise Schreiber Schussele in McCann Hollow, Olean. He worked on the farm. His uncle had a son named Johan and George's first name was Johan so he began to go by his middle name, George.

George's mother was born in Sweden to Charles and Hilda Tuveson. Her parents came to the United States by way of Boston on their way to Australia, but needed more money so Charles took a job in the mines in Pennsylvania and gradually worked his way up to Olean. George's parents met on a blind date on a winter sleigh ride. His father worked at Socony Vacuum. They bought a house on Garden Avenue in Olean from his grandfather. George went to School #4 in Olean, Olean High School for 2 years and finished in Allegany when the family moved there.

By this time his father was working in the construction industry and was quite often out of town. George's mother would make beer for his father to drink when he came back home. The grocery store at the corner of King and East State sold all the necessary ingredients for beer making, even though Prohibition was the law of the land. They had 20 gallon crocks, lots of bottles and a hand capper. His mother made the beer, his sister Flossie cleaned the bottles and did the capping and George filled the bottles using a siphon hose, which meant he got a sip or two of beer along the way. If they didn't have time to make beer, his father would go to the speakeasy next door run by Hugh Green. There was a dance hall in the attic and a bar on the first floor. After his grandfather was done with mowing the lawn, he would go to the speakeasy for a drink, taking George along. George would get his fill of dried smoked herring while his grandfather slaked his thirst.

The neighborhood was mostly Polish, and when a new family moved in that was Italian, they were referred to as "Blackhands" or "The Mafia." The workers on the railroads were mostly Italian. East Olean in the 1920's was considered the tough part of town, with nobody getting along with anyone else. There usually was a fight a night at the next door speakeasy. But Chief of Police Jack Dempsey kept good order in the town.

His family attended Immanuel Lutheran Church and he has fond memories of riding the streetcar to Riverhurst Park for the annual church picnic.

When the Depression came, George's father decided to move to a farm in Allegany where the family could raise their own food and have a few cows and pigs and chickens. Things were quieter in Allegany though there were also speakeasys in town, one being on South Fifth Street by the railroad tracks, but the building is gone today.

George said that the Learn Family Cemetery was near the farm and had slate gravestones that had been used – upside down – for sidewalks in the neighborhood. George turned them right side up so he could read the names. This was when he was eleven years old.

The family sold butter and eggs – George made butter every Saturday – and they also had four cows and 2 or three pigs. George's father eventually got an egg-vending machine that stood by the side of the road in front of the farm. George said he learned a good work ethic by working on the farm. George went to Allegany Central for the last two years of high school, then went to work at Daystrom Corporation where his father also worked, making tables. He bought a new Oldsmobile from Hartman Chevrolet in Salamanca. He was driving back from a date in Buffalo when he heard about the bombings at Pearl Harbor, and knew immediately that the "fun" was over for a while.

George had registered for the draft but had heard a story about radio operators and decided to go to school at Olean High School part-time to learn this trade, planning on entering the Army as a Second Lieutenant.

He had even quit his job and had gone to Alfred University full time for classes, but his plan failed as he was drafted first. He had many adventures during basic training, and then went to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey where he shipped out for England. He went on the Queen Elizabeth and was stunned by the size of the ship. He arrived in Scotland in 1942, and eventually wound up at a camp on Salisbury Plains near the Stonehenge prehistoric monument. The GI's were lodged with local families and George lived with a family in Basingstoke.

George went into Europe on D-Day plus one on Utah Beach. They crossed the Channel on Liberty ships then went down landing nets to smaller boats. George was surprised the beach was so clean. They immediately dug foxholes and had a rough first night on the beach but started to move inland in the morning. Some of the company hitched a ride inland on a truck loaded with howitzer shells. George decided that wasn't a smart thing to do about the time a German 88 started to strafe the area! The company "hopped, skipped and jumped" across France and Belgium. One of the men spoke fluent French which was a big help as they went. They slept anywhere they could, from barns to luxury hotels.

He helped clean out ammunition and gasoline dumps before the Battle of the Bulge. After that battle, no matter what a person's specialty was, everyone became "infantry." He never gave it a thought about going in the land of his father – Germany – in 1945. He was just glad to be helping to end the war. He considered his German relatives as the enemy. He was "an American soldier fighting a war". George was discharged on December 31, 1945, and was very glad to be a civilian again!

After the war he asked one of his friends to be his best man – but he didn't even have a girlfriend yet! His "best man" married a girl from Michigan and they moved to Olean. His wife had two cousins who came to visit and they asked George to date one of the girls, Jeanne Freiberg, – who became George's wife. They had two children, Susan and George III. Susan graduated from Elmira College and George III from St. Bonaventure University.

After the war, George came home to the farm and had an egg and chicken business. He sold broilers along with the eggs. Jeanne and George also had a big garden and sold strawberries, corn and other garden produce.

In the 1960's George went to work for Eastern Microwave as a technician, setting up relays in this area, and used his pre-war education in radios. He worked there for twenty years. He retired in 1987 at the age of 67. This allowed him to become very active in the Allegany American Legion.

George has nine grandchildren – Matthew is a fireman in New York City; Aaron is an architect in Washington State; Daniel is a musician in New Paltz, New York; George IV is an underwater welder for nuclear power companies; Luke is in the automotive business with his father-in-law; Claire works with YMCA's in the Portland, Maine area; Emily is an EMT on a boat that services drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico; the other two aren't out in the business world yet. George is immensely proud of all of them.

We are so glad that Wes Martin and his wife Judy, did this interview with George, and thank him for his time. It is a great treasure for AAHA and for his family. Thanks, George!



I spent the evening of December 10, 2012 doing a delightful interview with Celestine Welch. I hope you enjoy the results.

Celestine was born April 6, 1921 in Corydon, Pennsylvania. Corydon doesn't exist anymore as it was flooded in the construction of the Kinzua Dam. She is one of four sisters – Geraldine, Mary Elizabeth and Ann. Many people in Allegany will remember Geraldine McLaughlin from her storied career in the Allegany school system. Celestine's parents were James A. and Romaine Griffin McLaughlin. Her father was a science and math teacher at St. Bonaventure College, and commuted from Corydon, but when Celestine was young the family moved to Allegany, where she grew up. To her, Allegany was "the big city" after tiny Corydon!

Her father became ill when she was young and died when Celestine was 12 years old, and things then changed drastically in the family. For one thing, her mother had to learn to drive the family Hudson. Her mother had been doing some substitute teaching in Allegany, but then became a full time teacher. Her mother had gone to Edinboro School, and St. Bonaventure gave her a break on classes so she could get her bachelor's degree to be able to teach in the public school system. The college was also very helpful to the family and arranged for them to live in a house on Main Street in exchange for Celestine's mother keeping the records for St. Bonaventure Cemetery. She remembers that when people came from out of town looking for a particular gravesite, her mother would drive to the cemetery with them to help them out. Her mother was later elected as tax collector so that also helped the family.

Celestine and her sisters went to grade school at St. Bonaventure – "Little Bona's" – and then high school at St. Elizabeth's. The local students were "day hop" students; their freshman year was free and after that they paid \$50 a semester. If the weather was nice, she would roller skate to St. Elizabeth's, hide her skates and skate key in the bushes and roller skate home after school. Everyone knew where the skates were "hidden" but nobody ever took them. Of course, these were the clamp-on skates, nothing fancy. She took piano lessons and singing lessons from the nuns.

Celestine remembers that Allegany had many grocery stores when she was growing up – Sam Gagliaro's (where Collins Memorials now stands), Leo's, Market Basket, Willard & Smith which became Smith & Schultz, and others. Clarene Norton was the head clerk at Smith and Schultz who took the grocery orders, and Clarence Smith then delivered the groceries. She remembers the pleasant clank of the linotype machine at the Allegany Citizen when she walked by. The family went swimming in the Five Mile Creek at Archibald Cross Road. Her mother drove them there and packed a picnic lunch so they could eat after swimming. They also went to the movies in the theater at the town hall. When you went in the front door, the post office was on the left hand side, and Joe Norton was the Postmaster. On the right was Charlie Norton's newsroom. Upstairs was the theater and Charlie Norton acted as the unofficial usher.

The telephone company was across the street from the town hall, upstairs at 45 West Main Street. Agnes Dieteman and Rita Sheridan were the operators who ran the switchboard. Celestine would try to call her friend, Irene Grader, and Agnes would say, "Oh, honey, she's not home. I just saw her going into the Town Hall." Irene's phone number was 341R and Celestine's was 83J. Of course, everyone had party lines, and keeping things private was very hard. When the fire whistle blew, Celestine, and lots of others, would call the operator to find out where the fire was!

There were two doctors in town, Dr. Wintermantel and Dr. Andres. Dr. Wintermantel's office was at 4 East Main Street in the basement. If you had to go to the hospital, there was Olean General Hospital, the West Side Clinic at 7th and West State Street in Olean, and the Mountain Clinic on East State Street in Olean.

Allegany was a very friendly place to grow up. Nobody had cars like they do now so the kids were dependent on their parents to go places. The parents all took turns doing the driving. There were dances

at St. Elizabeth's and the Knights of Columbus. Square dances were greatly enjoyed. Her mother would take the girls to the Cuba Lake Pavilion for dancing or roller skating but this didn't happen too often. There were no "R" or "X" movies, everything was fine for kids to see. It was a very big occasion to go to Buffalo for shopping. The family took trips to visit aunts in Bemus Point and Elmira, which was considered "the end of the world". They drove through Woodhull and Jasper on old Route 17. The long Jasper hill was very hard on brakes.

Celestine started college with extension courses at St. Bonaventure, and she had to go at night as girls were not allowed to take classes during the day. She worked days at Montgomery Ward. When she went to Elmira to help take care of an elderly aunt, she finished her college education at Elmira College. She started teaching at Mount Morris, and would get rides home for visits on the mail truck. After four years there, she took a job teaching at Cattaraugus, again for four years. Then Principal Bob O'Donnell offered her a position in Allegany where she taught 10th grade for four years and then quit to get married. She went back to teaching after she raised her family.

She got married in 1947 to Chester Welch who had grown up on Maple Avenue. He had served in the Army, in the Infantry, and also worked as a fireman on the railroad. He then took a job as a lab technician in the research department at Hysol. They lived in an upstairs apartment on First Street, and went on to have five children, Jeannie, Jim, Sally, Fred and Tom. She has ten grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. There were a number of newly married couples in Allegany right after the war, and they all helped each other out. Celestine and Skip Soplop often watched each other's children. When they bought their first TV, they invited all the neighbors to come watch the shows! Celestine has lived a long, happy life and is still enjoying herself, and her family and friends.

Thanks, Celestine, for sharing your memories with us.

Memorials

For: Sara Slevinski

From: Francie Potter

For: Celestine Welch

From: Francie Potter; David and Roberta Mack-Hardiman; Barb Klich; Philip Hardiman; John and Jennifer Egan; Kevin and Michele Welc; Dale and Cass Becker; John. P Walsh; Tom and Audrey Ramage; Betsy Livingston; Viola Christensen; Emily Woodhead; Kathy and Pat Premo; April and John Lawrence; Margaret Johnson; Paula

Ursoy; Sonja and Andy Robinson; Deanne Hatter and Jose Ramos; Blake and Kim Johnson; Kelly Johnson and Ron Green; Marc Lawrence and Morgan Van Scoter; Travis and Kristen Lawrence; Colin Robinson; David Robinson; Paige and Matt Austin; John and Robyn Smith; Angie Smith and Andrea Mantle; Carolyn and John Criss; Kathy Ferguson; Christopher and Marissa Ferguson.

Allegany Area Historical Association
P.O. BOX 162
Allegany, NY 14706

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INSIDE SPECIAL ISSUE:

Presidents Report

100th Birthday

Remembering....Celeste

**WE WILL NOT BE OPEN FOR ANY PROGRAMS OR VISITORS
UNTIL NEXT SPRING.**

Message us on Facebook or email us at
Alleganyheritagecenter@gmail.com with your questions.

Take care, stay safe, and wear your mask when in public.

**CLOSED UNTIL SPRING 2021
HERITAGE CENTER
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