



Warrensburgh Historical Society Quarterly

Volume 9 Issue 1

Spring 2004

Annual Meeting and Elections

The Annual Meeting of the Warrensburgh Historical Society was held on Wednesday, March 3, 2004 at the Merrill Magee House. The meeting was well attended by over 50 members and friends, no doubt due to the wonderful program "A Trip through the Adirondacks with Seneca Ray Stoddard" presented by Dick Merrill of Glens Falls.

Seneca Ray Stoddard, of Glens Falls, was a highly talented photographer, writer, and promoter of the Adirondacks. Working in the latter half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, when photography was in its infancy, he produced a prodigious amount of views of the Adirondacks which are still treasured for both their artistic and historic value.

Election of Officers and Directors

A brief business meeting was conducted by Vice-President, Steve Parisi. Following mention of the two events held in 2003, the Artifacts Night and the Sticky Wicket, the slate of officers and directors was presented to the membership, as follows: - for president, Steve Parisi; vice president, Eileen Frasier; secretary, Melissa Morgan;

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Graveyard Walk Characters

The Annual Festival of Scarecrows includes a Graveyard Walk, highlighting some of Warrensburgh's former residents and business people. Sig Wachter was portrayed by Tom O'Dea.

Sig Wachter

By Steve Parisi

It was about 1920 that a man of unique talents and ambitions moved into Warrensburgh. He was a paid correspondent for The Post Star, and set about learning everything he could about the community. He got involved, and his name appears frequently in articles about numerous organizations of the day.

In addition to his reportorial duties, Sig Wachter served as Warrensburgh fire commissioner. He helped revive the Chamber of Commerce, an attempt, probably in the 30s or 40s that lasted only about three years due to lack of community support. He wrote about this himself in a letter to the editor of the Warrensburgh News in 1951, when another attempt was being made.

With the aid of a professor, Robert Wagner, he organized the Adirondack League of High Schools, and the Tri-County Basketball League, becoming its president during its existence. Sig was a member of the infamous Bear Waller Hunting Club, as described in an earlier Quarterly article (WHS Quarterly Vol. 8 Issue 1) and supplied the group with a radio for its hunting camp.

I remember Sig Wachter about 1950, as the severe old keeper of a shop – magazines, tobacco, radios and various sundries, plus the Western Union telegraph office – on Main Street between Millward's Pharmacy and Jacobs and Toney (right about where Jack Toney's gas pumps now stand). He kept his mer-

chandise perfectly organized (my sister always knew where to find her monthly Roy Rogers comic book) and had no truck with kids who wanted to just hang out and "sample" the merchandise. My mom enjoyed visiting with him because of their shared roots in New York City.

Sig was born in 1875 in Manhattan. Wachter is his mother's maiden name and, according to reliable sources, he believed he was born out of wedlock. His



mother, Josephine Wachter, was from Germany and worked for a wealthy family in the city. He went to Public School No. 68. In 1932 he wrote to one John F. Condon, a figure in national news at that time, inquiring if he was the same "Jack" Condon, the teacher "who used to keep us going in sports..." It was, and Mr. Condon replied with warm reminiscences of that

A Certain Stillness...

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A Certain Space

A Bi-Centennial Love Letter to the Community

by Patricia Potter Morgan

Submitted by her daughter, Melissa Morgan

Where and how do we begin to tell the young of their village heritage? Where does our walk through history begin?

...Lot No. 1 – Bond’s Pond – the year is 1786 – the man, a man named William Bond who was, it is “generally agreed”, the first settler whose land took on his name and whose name became, in later years, only an Echo...

...Hutchinson, Woodward, Potter and Hatch – remembered only because they were among the first – coming to or coming from – who is there to say?

...Warren – was it the hero or the brother who lent his name to the growing village? Was it the General and Doctor, the friend of Adams and Revere, the man who gave his life at Bunker Hill? Or was it the brother, the shopkeeper, the tavern master who “some say” lost his life in a drunken fall from a skiff while crossing the Hudson on Election Day – and does it matter which Warren joined the burg?

“Tradition states” – a poetic way to say “we think perhaps” - that Main Street was the old footpath of warring Algonquins – that James Fennimore Cooper stayed in Warrensburg while researching “Last of the Mohicans” – that a two-storied blockhouse stood at the southern entrance to town – Is it important? It wasn’t important enough at the time to record – does it matter enough now to surmise upon?

The spaces filled no more with old and lovely things – the stone castle on the hill, the old tavern by the river, the home of Warrensburg Pants (“World-renowned” – who of YOU have heard of them?)

...The racetrack and paddock – the sounds of firecrackers and horses running – the carnival melodies – stilled forever. Does anyone still listen for them? The lovely pillared mansions of Main Street – the stately elms – the trolley tracks – erased forever – destroyed by elements larger than men – the fire, the disease, the neglect, the apathy – Does any one still look for them?

Our native son – our hero – world fa-

mous – lifted out of his rude and rural life by winged dreams which became reality – traveling across the pole and back again, only to lose his life in a futile attempt to help his comrades – Memorialized in an airport which is abandoned and a bandstand which is silent.

Where do we begin our heritage tour – why do we begin – to point out a span of vacant fields and unremembered names to those who have no memories – who want no memories – who need no memories? Who is there to tell them? Who is there to listen?

The late Pat Potter Morgan is a descendant of several early Warrensburg families.

CARING FOR YOUR ANTIQUES ANTIQUE Pewter

Taking care of your antique pewter items can be a little more time consuming and need a little more thought than items made today. All pewter items new and old can be easily scratched and dented, and should therefore be treated carefully when using or storing. The following deals with antique pewter.

Antique pewter has a high lead content which will lead to corrosion in acid conditions, such as oak. It is inadvisable to store or display pewter pieces in or on oak furniture. Acids in the atmosphere can also cause the problem of powdery corrosion or spots. A heavily stained or dull surface can be treated by gently wiping it with a cloth soaked in linseed oil and talcum powder. The mixture should then be removed with a clean cotton or wool cloth moistened with methylated spirits (in a well-ventilated room), washed, rinsed and dried. Some like the look of a highly polished finish, others like it to develop a dark, matte surface.

Serving pieces should be washed soon after use with soap and water. DO NOT put in dishwasher. Foods or liquids should not be stored in pewter. Pewter



An example of a touchmark on a pewter charger (plate).

has a point

melting of ap-

proximately 450 degrees and should not be exposed to direct flame.

Pewter was introduced into Britain around the 2nd century by the Romans. After the 13th century it became widely used. Many towns had their own pewterer in their craft guild. By Act of Parliament in 1503, all pewter manufacturers were required to strike their maker’s mark on their wares. This was to enable identification to be made when checks were carried out at local fairs. These marks were called Touchmarks and are still used today in fine pewter objects. By the 17th century, there was scarcely a household in Britain that did not possess some items of pewter.

Indian Head – Revisited

The following was excerpted from a letter from WHS member Marge Bellmore to Joyce Harvey, membership chairperson, referencing the articles on Indian Head in the previous Quarterly.

..... Enjoyed the newsletter. I spent a month one summer (late 40s) as babysitter at Indian Head. Never realized they were all teachers although I always understood all guests were from the greater NY area and either related or knew each other. In August 1945 I went swimming at the town beach (after lifeguard left) with a friend. At some point the Indian Head beach filled up with people – singing, dancing, cowbell ringing. They crowded the fence separating their beach and the town’s and waved. We went over to see what was going on and were told the Japanese had surrendered and the War (WWII) was over.

.....

Sig Wachter – continued
time. (My research found that Dr. John

F. Condon was a key witness in identifying Bruno Richard Hauptmann, subsequently convicted as kidnapper of the Lindbergh child!)

Apparently an enterprising student, Sig attended Packard Business College, probably part-time while working. He became a newspaper reporter, working for almost every paper in New York City and frequently on the police headquarters beat. Moving on to the Atlantic City Press, he got involved in promotion work for several amusement businesses in Atlantic City.

That activity opened up a new career for Sig Wachter. Returning to New York City he became a booking agent for vaudeville acts, and at one time had more acts than any other agent in New York! He took to handling road shows, and he managed a number of large vaudeville theatres in the country.

Before World War I ill health influenced his decision to come north to manage the Opera House in Plattsburgh. Subsequently he took over the Empire Theater in Port Henry. It was there that he became a correspondent for The Post Star, which moved him to Warrensburg about 1920.

Sig Wachter found lodging in Warrensburg with Anna and Floyd Rhodes, where he resided for the rest of his life. Most of the factual information in this article was supplied by Martha Rhodes Ross, who remembers Sig fondly. On several occasions Sig took Martha and her sister, Marie, as young girls, to New York City for sightseeing. Martha told me that Sig always stated that he had no family, and apparently had few friends outside of the many he made while living Warrensburg.

Several pieces of correspondence from one Joe Laurie Jr. during the 1940s suggest he sought out old friends from his previous life as a vaudeville agent in New York City. (Joe Laurie Jr., an old-time comedian and vaudevillian, wrote a column for Variety, and several books on vaudeville. His death in 1954 at the age of 61 surely was a sad moment for Sig Wachter.)

Sig Wachter died October 11, 1960 at the age of 85. There were no known living relatives but many in Warrensburg mourned his passing, and no doubt still

remember the impact he made on our town.

May Day 1940

As reported in The Warrensburg News, the fourth annual May Day festival was celebrated on May 31, 1940 at the Recreation Field. The event, under the direction of Miss Louise Tubbs was replete with arrivals

formed, games were played, and there was a May Pole Dance.

Among the notable performers, in addition to those pictured, were Nicky Jacobs and Tommy Needham as pages, Maynard Baker as clown, Malcolm Monroe and Mary Menshausen as king and queen of England, James Gallup as Little John and Robert Venton as Will Stutley. The WCS Band was under the direction of Wilson Montena.



Court: From left to right, in background, Louise Tubbs (vocal music teacher): on platform, Jeanette Henry (late wife of former supervisor Cal Engle), Marion Huntington, (daughter of then school doctor, Patrick Huntington); Margaret Ann Bellmore (who supplied the Quarterly with these pictures).

Thanks to M a r g e (Margaret Ann) Bellmore of New Hampshire, daughter of the late Siana Bellmore, for May Day photos and newspaper article. Both photos by Earl Austin, Old Homestead Studio, Warrensburg.

of the king and queen of England and their attendants and of Robin Hood and his Merry Men. A May Queen was crowned, English folk songs were sung, episodes from Robin Hood were per-



Flower Girls: From left to right, Beverly Bolton, Barbara Farrar, Lenita Bennett, (unidentified), "heralds" Jack Cunningham and Dick Griffin, Margaret Ann Bellmore, Marilyn Burch, (unidentified), June Smith, Pauline LaFond.

Presidents Letter

If our recent Annual Meeting is any indication, 2004 promises to be a busy year for the Historical Society. Already scheduled by your Board of Directors is the first "**Artifacts Night**" of the year, to be held on **March 30** (perhaps about when you receive this Quarterly). Due to its popularity in the past it was decided to hold two this year. In addition, we hope to schedule other historic talks, such as the one by Dick Merrill at the Annual Meeting. And of course, our major fund raiser, the **Sticky Wicket and Picnic** will take place, this year on Sunday, **August 15**. (Please put that date on your calendar.)

We welcome several new Board members. "Missy" Morgan, Sherri Lamy and Jackie Leonbruno grew up in Warrensburg. Rita Ferraro came to town more recently. All have expressed a deep interest in Warrensburg's history. (Rita recently served as a "caretaker" during the Graveyard Walks.) Not forgotten are continuing board members Eileen Frasier, Joyce Harvey and Jean Hadden. Their ideas and hard work keep us afloat.

I will echo here the comments I made at the Annual Meeting regarding past officers and directors. John and Brenda Cleveland and LD Hall were truly "caretakers" of the Historical Society, giving generously of their time and talents. Thanks are also due to Millie Fish and LeeAnn Rafferty for their dedication and support.

Speaking of dedication and support, you, the members of the Warrensburgh Historical Society, alone, determine the success of this organization. We thank you for your interest in Warrensburg's history (something about "learning from the past for a better future"), for attending our meetings and bringing potential new members with you, we thank you for submitting articles and pictures (or even ideas) to this Quarterly, and, we thank you for paying your dues in a timely manner!

Steve

Contributors to this issue:

Marge Bellmore

Missy Morgan

Steve Parisi

Sandi Parisi, Quarterly Editor

We welcome comments, corrections, articles, pictures, reminiscences, and letters to the editor. Send to :

Warrensburgh Historical Society

c/o Sandi Parisi

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Warrensburg, NY 12885

or parisibb@netheaven.com

**The next Quarterly Deadline is
May 1**

New Society Members

Margaret Ann Bellmore

Clara Cleveland

Edward & Alice Damp

Herbert & Myra Frelich

Ruth Fruda

Douglas & Louise Goettsche

Jackie & Don Hazlett

Sharon Klussendorf

Sherri Lamy

Jackie Leonbruno

Joan B. Ossakow

Membership Information

Membership Classifications

Individual	\$12.00
Student	\$ 8.00
Family	\$25.00
Senior (62+)	\$ 8.00
Contributing	\$ 50.00
Corporate	\$ 75.00
Institutional	\$100.00
Life*	\$250.00

*Individual Only

Membership is on a calendar year basis.

If you would like to join and receive the Quarterly by mail, please send check for the amount of the membership classification, with name, address and phone number to:

Warrensburgh Historical Society,
PO Box 441, Warrensburg, NY 12885.

Board of Directors

Steve Parisi- President

Eileen Frasier - Vice President

Jackie Leonbruno - Treasurer

Melissa Morgan - Secretary

Rita Ferraro

Jean Hadden

Joyce Harvey

Sherri Lamy

The Board of Directors will meet at the Senior Center, 3847 Main Street, at 7 PM on the second Tuesday of each month. Society members welcome. Call Steve to confirm at 623-2207.

Annual Meeting

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treasurer, Jackie Leonbruno and directors, Rita Ferraro and Sherri Lamy. (The other current board members, whose two-year terms will expire one year from now, are Jean Hadden and Joyce Harvey.) There being no other nominations, Regina Porter made a motion, seconded by Sarah Farrar, to accept the entire slate as presented.

Parisi expressed a heartfelt thank you to outgoing president John Cleveland for keeping the Society going for the past year and to Brenda Cleveland, who served admirably, first as secretary and then as treasurer, during the past 3 years. Both John and Brenda expressed a need for more time for their growing business, A Little Touch of Country. He also thanked outgoing board member Millie Fish, for her clear historical memory and also her willingness to help with the nitty-gritty chores of keeping this organization going, and also to LD Hall, our former treasurer, whose business needs also necessitated a reduction in his involvement. It was hoped that all would continue their support of the association.

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NOTICE

The recording of history is an interpretive and ever changing study. Therefore, the Warrensburgh Historical Society or its Board of Directors or members shall not be held liable for the accuracy or authenticity of the material herein. We welcome and encourage corrections, comments and additional information.