UPCOMING EVENTS

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE
SUNDAY
DECEMBER 6, 2009
1 TO 5 PM
DECORATIONS BY
MARY ELLEN WESTLAKE
“TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS”
CHRISTMAS MUSICAL PROGRAM
2:00 P.M.
ALMOND UNION CHURCH

AHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2010
3:00 P.M.
HAGADORN HOUSE

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO: THE FLOODS!
Compiled by Donna B. Ryan

In the Alfred Sun’s 25 YEARS AGO column this summer were reminders of the two floods that hit the area in 1984—eight weeks apart—and took the life of one of Almond’s longtime residents, George H. Benson.

Once again, thanks to volunteers who clip and file newspaper accounts in the Hagadorn House archives files, there is a very large file of newspaper clippings which describe the two events and the struggle during the months that followed to repair the damage and return to normalcy.

The June 21, 1984 Alfred Sun tells this account of the first flood: “Severe thunderstorms dumped more than three inches of rain on parts of Allegany County Monday morning, (June 18) resulting in extensive damage due to flooding. The towns of Almond and Alfred were the hardest hit by the waters. One death has been blamed on the flooding in Almond, as George H. Benson, 63, of 48 Main Street, suffered an apparent heart attack at about 1 p.m. Monday while working to clean up debris. Heavy rains early in the morning, following rain through the night, caused the Canacadea Creek to crest in Alfred. Plugged sluice pipes caused runoff into roadways, carrying debris into the streets and flooding basements and low-lying areas. Alfred and Alfred Station firefighters were pumping cellars Monday throughout the day. The Satterly Hill bridge approach was washed out in the town of Alfred, just south of Almond.

“The major damage in the area was in the village of Almond, where the McHenry Valley Creek and the Canacadea Creek meet. The Ledges bridge in McHenry Valley was washed out and much of the road as well. A gas main on Main Street near the fire hall was ruptured by the flooding, as water and debris pounded against the Main Street bridge. Although no damage was sustained to the Almond fire hall, firefighters sandbagged the building first to ensure its emergency capabilities.

“Water flowed down Main Street as it spilled over the Canacadea’s banks at the Main Street bridge, filling basements, knocking two homes off their foundations, wrapping an above-ground pool around a tree, knocking over storage sheds, washing out or leaving stones and silt in backyards,” the Sun reported.

Stories in the Olean Times Herald give more details: “Leon Crooks said he and his wife, Virginia, ‘saw the water coming up
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO: THE FLOODS! CONT...

around 8:30 a.m. from the door of his trailer. His trailer was moved from its foundations by powerful waters and was swept at least 50 feet from its original location. "We were lucky the two telephone poles held the trailer (where it ended up). He noted that his neighbor, Ed Griffin, found his cabin cruiser and trailer '300-400 yards away' in the yard of Guy Washburn. 'That boat was the only thing that kept Washburn's trailer from being washed away,' Mr. Crooks said.

Fire Chief William Snyder was quoted as saying that his department had received calls from 50-75 village residents seeking help...some "damage was minimal...but others were wiped out." Another Times story reported major washouts and bridge closings in Bishopville.

Thankfully, the June 1984 flood was not as severe as the legendary 1972 flood, but the loss of George Benson's life made it a very sad, solemn event. George had lived in Almond for thirty years, and was retired from Erie/Courail. He was a World War II veteran of the Air Force 7th Bomber Command in the Pacific, and was an avid sportsman. Craig Braack, Allegany County Historian, was on his way to work in Alfred that morning, and remembered it this way: "It rained very hard and I saw the Creeks at the Alfred red light jump its banks and thought it best I get back to Almond, anticipating the water being greater downstream...About 1:00 or so the afternoon of the June flood, many of us were at the fire hall taking calls for pumping details, etc.... We received the call at Benson's and our response time was about three seconds and out the door. We immediately started CPR when we found him in yard between the house and the garage. I have no idea who else was on the call but I will never forget the intense efforts of all involved to save him."

On June 20, the Olean Times Herald reported that a state of emergency had been declared, and the town and village of Almond boards under the leadership of Supervisor Bob Costello and Mayor Lewis Wheeler, "agreed that town highway Superintendent James Winters be allowed to go 'over budget' in making repairs." Winters had informed the board that the 'flood was not as severe in terms of road damage as the flood in 1972, but he added that there was far more channel damage done to area streams than there was 12 years ago.'

Another Times Herald article features Assemblyman Richard Wesley's tour of areas hardest hit in Allegany County, and quoted him as saying, "I wish to dear God that this didn't happen to you." John Hasper, chairman of the Allegany County Legislature, estimated the total cost of cleanup for the county to be around $3 million -- "It may be low," he was quoted. "If the governor declares a disaster, then labor and equipment will become available from the DOT," Wesley told officials. The extensive stream damage was a huge concern in Almond, with the cost of restoring streams and riprap walls estimated at a million dollars. Winters noted that "two-thirds of the riprap walls installed after the 1972 flood have been washed away...There's nothing to hold it (the stream bank) now..." he commented, fearing that "if any more heavy rains come into the area in the near future, flooding could be worse."

Additional stories quote Winters' description of flood waters piling "rocks 'as high as 20 feet in the air' in stream beds before moving on its course of destruction. The speed of the water was the real problem and creek channels were rerouted as well." Winters noted that the highway crew was working a minimum of 50 hours per week, and that it would take the crew more than a year to replace the top gravel lost from roads. "He added that the theory
that these floods occur every 100 years is wrong, pointing out that similar floods occurred in 1935, ’47, ’68, and ’72. He said all those floods were declared disasters and he feels the town needs a good flood control program,” the article went on.

A letter-writing campaign was instituted to make state officials aware of the need for state support in cleaning up, urging Gov. Mario Cuomo to declare a state of emergency, which would bring additional state aid to the community. Village Clerk Dorothy Boyd warned that if state aid was not received local taxes may be much higher next year.

On July 17, a story in the Times headlined “CUOMO SIGNS AID BILL TO ASSIST TOWNSHIPS” reported that the disaster area designation “free up state equipment for use on roads” and also “some stream work...” Although the state’s declaration did not include financial aid, it would make SBA loans money available, as well as various state and federal aid programs. While preparing to jointly apply for a $1 million grant to repair damage, town and village officials said that the main stipulation in qualifying for the grant is that 51 per cent of the town and village residents affected by the flood must be of low income status. To meet the stipulation, a house-to-house survey was conducted to help strengthen the grant application.

But eight short weeks later, area residents, still jittery whenever it rained too long, soon realized their greatest fear: Another flash flood! The Olean Times Herald story dated August 14, 1984, headlined “AGAIN, ALLEGANY COUNTY FACES FLOODING PROBLEM”, reads: “Torrential rains that hit Almond around 7:30 p.m. Monday night are blamed for extensive flood damage which Almond Volunteer Fire Department officials are calling a “carbon copy” of the June 1984 flood that ravaged the community.

Almond fireman Larry Zeliff reported that the water came up “extremely fast, within 10-15 minutes at the most.”

The Alfred Sun dated August 16, 1984 reported: “Almond was hit again with a serious flood Monday night, eight weeks after the last flood. While damage in the village is not as extensive as the June 18 flood, damage outside the village is worse. The reason damage was worse is probably because of the poor condition of the streams after the June 18 flood. Town streams were filled with debris and rechanneled during the June flood and never returned to the original channel. Therefore, when the heavy rains hit this time, the streams went wild, washing out roads and bridges and flooding cellars.

“Some 30 persons were evacuated from their homes in the northern part of the township in the hamlet of Bishopville. Karr Valley, McHenry Valley and North Almond Valley all experienced extensive damage. A broken water main on Canecadea Street added to the town and village officials’ woes at 1 p.m. Tuesday. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation had contracted A. L. Blades to clean the stream and rebuild the banks near the Almond Municipal Building. Had that work not been completed, the damage in the village could have been worse. The town and village jointly applied for a $1 million HUD Community Block Grant to finance repairs and cleanup for town and village streams after the June flood. Monday night’s flooding gives more support for the grant’s approval. Notification of approval or denial is expected Oct 1, 1984.”

Leo Weitzen’s house, located on...
feet of land from his back yard and tearing chunks of land from under the addition on the back of his house. “When the water receded, Leo found the back room to his house suspended over the creek bed,” the Times reported. “I give up. I can’t win under these conditions. I’ve paid and paid and I can’t take it any more,” he was quoted as saying.

On Wednesday, August 15, 1984, the Evening Tribune reported that another state of emergency had been declared by the town board, and deputy town clerk Arlene McMahon stated that equipment and manpower from the State DOT and Town of Wellsville “have moved into the area to assist local crews… We still have people in the northern section who cannot get out… they are stranded.”

To add to the discouragement, the Times on Thursday, August 16, 1984, printed this headline: “CUOMO DID NOT FORWARD AID REQUEST” and went on to explain that “the reason for no federal assistance is that Gov. Cuomo never applied for it for area counties because he felt that two federal programs – the Army Corps of Engineers and the Soil Conservation Service – combined with state and local disaster aid, were enough and that it was unnecessary to request further federal assistance.” Contacts with FEMA indicated no disaster assistance application for Allegany County had been filed with that agency. Elisabeth Johnson, Congressman Stan Lundine’s spokesman, noted that the congressman “plans to contact Gov. Cuomo and ask him to reassess his position and ask for federal assistance.”

The next day, Friday, August 17, state and county officials, as well as Congressman Stanley Lundine and an entourage of Army Corps of Engineers officials and representatives of the Soil Conservation Service and Office of Emergency Services toured the area for two hours, assessing damage with village and town officials and Highway Superintendent Winters.

Once again, residents were urged to write to their elected representatives, seeking support for the application for federal funding. Residents continued to clean up… town highway crews worked endless hours restoring roads and repairing streambeds and banks… Village and town officials continued to knock on the doors of federal agencies, asking for financial assistance… It was a long summer…

One year later, the August 14, 1985 Evening Tribune gave a recap of the previous summer’s events, and reported: “As dry, humid weather prevails throughout the area, it is hard to believe that one year ago today residents were wading through boat-deep water from torrential rains that caused flooding in some areas of Steuben and Allegany counties. There is barely a trickle of water running through river and creek beds right now, a blatant contradiction of an entirely different picture area residents experienced August 11-14, 1984.”

The good news in this Tribune article is that financial help was finally granted. “The federal disaster declaration, which provided public and individual assistance for damages, finally came in September from President Ronald Reagan. The declaration covered Steuben, Allegany and Yates counties,” the article stated.

In the meantime, a new, higher bridge has been constructed over Almond’s Main Street, providing a wider creek bank and more height for potential flooding and debris from McHenry Valley and Karr Valley Creeks.

It has been twenty five years since the last flooding… but there still are many residents who have lived through the nightmares of the floods of ’72 and ’84… some who also remember the ’35 flood. Surely, none will ever forget….
MY AUNT PHYLLIS
BY JOHN DAVID FENNER (HUBER HTS, OH)

My Aunt Phyllis was everyone’s favorite person. She had the unique ability to make everyone in her presence feel important . . . something she really felt. She had no children of her own, but she collected them everywhere she went; her school library where she was librarian, her neighborhood in Greenwich Village, her nieces and nephews. Phyllis was like the Pied Piper, but instead of a flute, it was her storytelling and effervescent charm that captivated her little friends.

Phyllis Reid Fenner, born in 1899 in Almond, New York, was the second child of William Lavern (WL) Fenner and Viola Victoria (Ola) VanOrman Fenner. Jessamine Carol, 1895, and Andrew Jackson II, 1904, were their other two children.

Upon graduation from Mt. Holyoke College, Phyllis sought work in the New York City area and was employed by the Plandome Road School, Manhasset, NY as a school librarian, a position she retained for more than 35 years. During the early years, Phyllis reorganized the library and encouraged the children to read by regaling them with stories: fairy tales, Rudyard Kipling’s “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi” and “Just So Stories.” Her renown as a storyteller spread and she often did summer tours of schools and libraries giving talks on children’s reading and entertaining with storytelling.

Her first foray into writing was “Our Library,” the story of the reorganization of the school library and the success she had with her children’s reading program. She followed this with a magazine article, “My Grandfather’s Store,” the story of a General Store in Almond, NY, begun by her grandfather in 1858 and later run by her father. The latter article first appeared in American Mercury, later in Atlantic Monthly and Reader’s Digest. “Proof of the Pudding” was her book about children’s reading and how to encourage this endeavor.

In 1941, Phyllis published a compilation of horse stories in an anthology, “There Was A Horse,” dedicated to her brother’s children. “To Carol who loves to read, to Faith who ‘gets enough reading in school’ and to David who reads the pictures.” This book marked the beginning of a remarkable career of more than 35 editions published over a forty year span; anthologies of fairy tales, stories of animals, adventurers, pioneers, heroes, racers and many other interesting subjects. Many of her books are still in print.

Phyl’s books were illustrated by a number of accomplished artists. Her book dedications were often to her family and friends, my sisters, brothers and I appearing several times over the years.

Early in her writing career, Phyllis conceived the “Triple-Title-Series,” beginning with “Horses, Horses, Horses” and moving through “Cowboys, Cowboys, Cowboys,” “Dogs, Dogs, Dogs,” “Indians, Indians, Indians,” etc. I provided some suggestions for inclusions in her Cowboy book and it was dedicated “to David who gave me enough ideas for three books.” The Indian book was dedicated to my twin brothers, “to our own little Indians, Bill and Andy.”

My own personal memories of my Aunt Phyllis began very early in my life. Phyllis, who never married, spent a lot of time visiting my Dad, her brother, and our family. Phyl would always entertain my friends and me with her storytelling. She would also tell my family and me about children in her school library and her neighbors in her Greenwich Village apartment building. I recall being jealous of other children who had my aunt’s attention.

Phyllis Fenner also reviewed books for various publications: Harpers Bazaar, The New York Times Book Review Section, Atlantic Monthly and others. She would be provided with publisher’s editions to review and when done she would give these copies to those she felt would appreciate them. I recall receiving 26 books from Aunt Phyllis one Christmas. Ultimately, I had so many books that I donated a
MY AUNT PHYLLIS CONT...

number of them to the AACS library.

Aunt Phyllis always retained the connection with her birthplace, Almond, NY, often holding storytelling sessions at the Twentieth Century Club Library on Main Street, when she was home to visit. Phyllis sent publisher’s copies of her books to the library, as they came out.

Phyllis’ influence on young people didn’t stop with the children in her school, but affected the lives of all those whom she met throughout her life. My sister, Carol, encouraged by our Aunt, became an award-winning writer of children’s literature; The Newbery Award Nomination (twice), the Caldecott and Christopher Awards and the Coretta Scott King Award for Children’s Literature. My first literary effort, a sci-fi short story written in my late teens, was well received by Aunt Phyllis. She loved it (but didn’t understand it).

This remarkable woman lives on in many libraries around the country and in the hearts and minds of all of us whose lives she touched.

ALMOND’S MOST PROLIFIC WRITER: PHYLLIS R. FENNER
COMPILED BY DONNA B. RYAN

For many years, Almond Historical Society officers and planners tried to bring one of Almond’s most famous women and its most prolific writer, Phyllis Fenner, back to her home town – and they were finally successful in the 1970s when she appeared as the guest of honor for the society’s fourth annual arts and crafts festival and antique and flea market.

In a write-up of the event in the Evening Tribune, it was noted that she had a total of 54 books to her credit, as well as countless magazine and newspaper feature articles, many of which involve reminiscing about her home life in Almond.”

The account continues: “As nearly 100 people sought to escape the warm midsummer sunlight in chairs placed beneath a spreading crabapple tree, Miss Fenner addressed the group from the porch of the Hagadorn House and recalled her impressions about growing up in that neighborhood three quarters of a century ago.

“In her short speech, she remembered Harry Bell, the meat cutter at the local market who was also a drummer in the town band and played the same syncopation as he hacked fresh meat on the cutting board; Floyd Straight, who used to sell her quart buckets of raspberries in the summer; Mrs. Bertram, the village’s woman barber. She talked about the library that was once located over Taylor’s Store in the village and how she helped raise money for the present library building and about how she saw medicine shows, movies and her first real play, ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ in the hall above Fenner’s Store.

“Her ability to recall what everyone was doing during the days of her childhood is possible because she spoke of a day when everyone was concerned with everyone else and even the smallest incident in the town became public knowledge quickly.

“She recalled a phone call discussing funeral arrangements during which half the town seemed to be listening in on the line. When the call was concluded, one of the village residents phoned and asked ‘What time is the funeral? I couldn’t hear because Pa was pumping.’

“That got to be a pretty common phrase in town. . . When people couldn’t hear what you were saying on the line . . . they’d tell you they couldn’t hear, because Pa was pumping.”

The Evening Tribune story went on to explain that Phyllis returned to Almond “frequently prior to the time of her father’s death 20 years ago. In 1955 she gave up her job as a children’s librarian in Manhasset, to begin writing full time. She now lives in Manchester, VT.”

Noted for her innovative ideas and methods in children’s library techniques and philosophies, Phyllis’ book, “Our Library” was featured in a 1940 Time magazine article which describes her as “tweedy, twitty little Miss Fenner” who has presided very successfully over a “remarkable library in the elementary schools of Manhasset, L.I.” for more than 20 years.

The Time article went on: “Miss Fenner has a sympathetic ear for what children really like, and her
library is a favorite hangout of Manhasset moppets. . . . Miss Fenner's library has tot-size sofas and club chairs upholstered in red and blue where her small customers may be found at all hours (even after school). Miss Fenner rarely sits at her librarians' desk. While children sign out their own books, she tours the bookshelves, listening gravely to criticisms of stories, helping choose books. She also runs a stamp club, a dramatic club (for acting stories) a library club (to help straighten books, stamp cards, etc) and a storytelling hour.

"Children (like their elders) dislike brown book covers, unbroken pages of type fine print. The often annoy their parents by ignoring old copies of "The Jungle Book" and "Robinson Crusoe" on the family bookshelves and bringing home from the library, as fresh discoveries, the same book-- illustrated."

Her book, "Our Library," was presented to the Almond Library, it was reported in the March 19, 1942 issue of the Alfred Sun: "This is the account of a great adventure. Phyllis Fenner is forever seeking new ways and contriving means by which she can win children to books. That is her aim as a school librarian -- though the term jack-of-all-trades might better be applied to one who has so energetically employed materials and methods borrowed from one field after another. Miss Fenner's invigorating enthusiasm makes her book a tonic for all librarians; her sympathetic appreciation of the ways of children, together with a grand sense of humor, renders it a book that anyone will enjoy. Games that test children and help teachers of divers subjects, editing and book-reviewing by children for their own newspaper, dramatization of stories, after-school clubs: these are a few of the procedures here discussed. Her own story-telling has brought rich rewards in interest among the children who flock to hear her, and she tells the titles of the tales she has found most successful."

The Almond Library on Main Street has shelf dedicated to the Fenner books. The dedication pages of some of them give more insight into this talented lady's life. "Finders Keepers, Stories of Treasure Seekers," was dedicated to four of her favorite libraries: The Almond Library, Plandome Road School Library, New York Public Library, and Mark Kenner Library, Manchester, VT. She has signed the book, and has written: "For the Almond Library, the joy of my childhood." She writes in another one, dated 1971, "To the Almond Library to which I owe so much -- my 50th book to add to your Fenner shelf."

After an illustrious career dedicated to children, Phyllis passed away in 1982. Her love of books was passed down to her beloved nieces and nephews, as was her writing talent: the late Carol Fenner was the author of several children's books and the recipient of many honors, including the first person to be inducted into the Alfred Almond Central School Alumni Association's Humanitarian Hall of Fame in 2001. Her nephew, John David Fenner, is also the author of a full length novel, "Before His Time: The Spirit Warrior," which is available online through Amazon.com.

So . . . go to the Almond Library and ask Val or Tammy to show you the Fenner shelf -- and check out one of the books on your favorite subject. This editor is presently reading a collection of Civil War stories from Phyllis' book, "Brother Against Brother."
WE HEAR FROM OUR READERS
COMPILED BY DONNA B. RYAN

In an email from Linda Davis Turri, Sodus Point, NY, we read: Donna, I received my Almond newsletter today and I have to thank you for writing such a beautiful article about Charles Henderson and writing such nice things about my mom. It was really a lovely read. Here is another tidbit for you……

Apparently Charlie's mother was from a wealthy family from upstate NY. At his home, while growing up, there was a piano. My grandfather, my mom's dad, Arthur, would go up there to play the piano. He died at thirty-two from TB. Frank Spratt and Addie were husband and wife, Addie being the second. These are the ones who lived across from Washburns (on Canacadea Street). When Arthur died, Alice Burdell (my mom's sister, and went to live with Uncle Stitt in Hornell. I believe that is how the story goes, although she came back to Frank's for many, many visits. Frank was the blacksmith in Almond. Again, great read. Linda

Her sister, Joan Davis, sent this email from Rochester: "Hi Donna: Got home last night and literally ripped it open. I loved the article and loved the picture. I am sending it to Gene Clancy and Helen Wright.

Gene's wife (Judy) took care of Charlie until he passed. The Clancys lived about two cottages away from Charlie on Loon Lake. Helen Wright is Gene's aunt and one of my mother's dearest friends. She resides in Arlington. I spoke to her two weeks ago - she will be 95 in Oct and told her I would send her the article. Helen Wright's sister - Marg Jordan - lived at the end other end of the lake - same side as Charlie - they all knew each other and all grew up with each other. Both Gene and Helen will love the article!!!!!!!!!

I also loved Pat Washburn's article - I think it's wonderful that more and more people are sharing their memories with you, and ultimately, with all the subscribers of the newsletter - leaves a bit more time for you I'm sure. Evelyn Kane's picture was in the picture. I sent you a while ago with all the girls sitting on the steps of the old Almond High School. Wow - love this trip down memory lane. Joan"

The AHS website (www.usgennet.org/usa/ny/town/almond) continues to receive posts from folks looking for genealogy information, which Doris Montgomery and Kitty Baker research and answer on their Friday work days. Recently, a request of local interest appeared: “My name is Terry Torrence McDaniel and I am doing research into the Torrence family. I would like to know if there are any pictures of the Torrence Hardware Store that was located directly across the road from the Historical Society at one time. My grandfather Fay Torrence ran the hardware store when I was very young. There was also a small home behind the hardware store where an older woman whose first name may have been Mattie? If you have any information or photos of the hardware store and Mattie's home I would appreciate it! I had a lot of memories there! Thank you so much! Terry McDaniel, Hornell, NY.” Doris expects Terry to come to Hagadorn House on a Friday afternoon to look through the files to find historical information, pictures, and Torrence family information.

Hornell accountant Don Doster sent this after reading the story about Charlie Henderson: “Somewhere in there Charlie was Executive Director of NYSDA, New York State Automobile Dealers Association. When I worked for L. W. Hooker, Studebaker dealer (12/1960 – 1/1963 fulltime, part time till he passed away), Lew talked about his servicing there.

For twenty-eight years, my dad, Albert Doster, worked as chief of maintenance and construction projects for the Hornell Brewery, and Charlie's dad, Earl “Humpy” Henderson, was afternoon shift fireman there – He was wheeling in coal and feeding the stokers into his late 80s!! So the four of us, two fathers and two sons, all knew each other. Even working all the time on State taxes, I had never been to Albany, so when Karyl and I married Memorial weekend of 1977, our honeymoon was two days at Cooperstown and two days of exploring the State government buildings. Muriel Galleher, Charlie’s “gal Friday”, took us first to the rear visitor gallery of the Assembly to see all the big name leadership people, then around to the front gallery, where we were seated directly above the presiding officer. Charlie saw us up there, waited for a break in the debate to ask for the floor, and announced, “I want to introduce some prominent citizens of Hornell, New York, who are visiting the State Assembly on their wedding trip” and on and on for quite a while. Getting a few laughs, so some must have been listening, and winding up, “May I present, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Doster!?” I told him about it many years later and he offered to have the official minutes corrected, but I said don't bother. . .”
Our September meeting featured Bob Dorsey, of Wellsville, compiler of the book, “Executions in Allegany County, New York”. He gave a very interesting talk about the life and confession of David D. How, the first person executed in Allegany County, March 19, 1824. How was charged with the murder of Othello Church on December 30, 1823, in Angelica. He was arraigned on February 3, 1824, and confined at the county seat, Angelica, in a room about 12 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 6 1/2 feet high, furnished with an old stove, a straw bed and comfortable clothing and several chairs. The prisoner, about six feet tall, was secured by a “clasp of iron around each ankle (sic) to which was connected a chain, three feet long, fastened to the floor,” according to the account written by Elder Joseph Badger, who was “summoned by the prisoner three weeks before his execution to assist him in preparation for the great change which awaited him.”

What follows is Badger’s record of daily visits with How and transcriptions of How’s address to Othello Church’s widow, the particulars of the last eighteen days of his life, an account of his execution, and the substance of a discourse delivered at the gallows. Badger’s introduction reads: “The writer had an opportunity of observing his conduct, and he feels a conviction that he sought and found mercy of Him, from whom alone mercy is to be expected, by erring mortals, and that his sins had been washed away by the blood of a Saviour. These pages, written in a hasty manner, and in the midst of circumstances calculated to distract the mind, are, with diffidence, submitted to a candid public, with the most sincere wish that the awful example here afforded, may be made useful in deterring others from giving loose to their unholy passions, which often lead to ignominy and death.”

There are eight pages of conversation and details of the last eighteen days of How’s life, beginning with Badger’s comment: “I entered the dungeon at 2 o’clock PM March 2nd . . .” What follows are accounts of How’s visitors, including his wife and children, several pastors, old neighbors, the sheriff, and former business associates (including those that he had offended). During that time, documents of confession, repentance and requests for forgiveness, as well as admonitions to others to avoid such sin, were drawn up. How’s reactions and emotions ranged from “an almost despairing state of mind”, “filled with doubts and fears” and “brokenhearted” to attitudes of humility, solemnity, consolation, resignation and prayer.

The actual execution drew a huge crowd: Considering this event occurred less than 30 years from the date that the very first settlers came to Allegany County, it is amazing that 6000 persons were present, including 100 militia. How processed to the gallows in white cap and robe, following his coffin, and “his countenance was pale, solemn, and yet pleasant.” An orator read the 51st Psalm (Watts’), the prisoner’s favorite, which “he frequently sang in the dungeon and was very expressive of his feelings at the present time.” A very moving sermon was preached, after which How spoke at length, describing particulars of his life and giving no excuse for his sins . . . asking forgiveness from all. He was given ten minutes on the plank, rope hitched, and he said: “I hope this will be a warning to all the people, and I wish all this congregation to pray for me.” Then he continually prayed for himself, saying “O God, have mercy on me, a sinner! O Lord, help me to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who has tasted death for the chief of sinners. O God, be near to me; there is but a step between me and death, and my sun is about to set in an eternal night.”

After his death, his body was “deposited in the coffin, under the direction of Judge Van Campen, who took charge of the procession . . . his wife and friends followed him to the grave, where he was decently deposited . . .”

Thanks to Bob Dorsey, who acquired a copy of Elder Badger’s out-of-print book, along with newspaper articles dealing with other executions in Allegany County, for compiling the stories for future generations to read. Following his talk, we received this email from Bob: “I was thinking afterwards how fortunate you are to have such a nice museum and society. The Angelica Library just doesn’t have room to add to their collection, but I am sure if there was a museum over there people would be happy to donate items. The museum here in Wellsville could use more space as well. You have an ideal setup.”
ATTENTION: GENEALOGISTS

ALLEN COUNTY, INDIANA PUBLIC LIBRARY HELPS PRESERVE RESEARCH

The Allen County Public Library in Ft. Wayne, Indiana offers a service for those who have done many years of research but do not plan to publish a genealogy. Just send your unbound “master copy” to the Historical Genealogy Department. In exchange for the privilege of allowing them to make one copy for their collection, they will make an additional copy for you FREE of charge and return it and the master to you.

What a great way to preserve your work and make it available for other researchers who otherwise would not be aware of it. In addition, you have no worries about it being destroyed after you are gone.

To take advantage of this service, mail your unbound “master copy” to Steve Myers, Assistant Manager, Historical Genealogy Dept., P.O. Box 2270, Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270. Include a note designating the work for the “Photocopy Exchange Program.”

Direct line telephone number to the Historical Genealogy Dept is 1-260-421-1225.

SUE TURNER ESTATE GIFT RECEIVED

In the July/Aug/Sept 2009 AHS newsletter, we reported the passing of Sue Turner in Sandy Spring, MD on May 25, 2009. Just recently, we received the great news that Sue had remembered the Almond Historical Society with a bequest of $5,000. Sue and her husband, Bob, moved to the area in 1946, where they remained for several decades, sharing their time, and very special talents and abilities with many community boards and groups. They moved to Friends Retirement Community in 1999. We are very grateful that Sue’s legacy will remain at Almond Historical Society.

BOOKS AVAILABLE BY AHS MEMBERS

John David Fenner, AACS 1954 graduate, has written a full-length novel, “Before His Time: The Spirit Warrior,” which is available at Amazon.com. The Amazon site describes the book this way “Before His Time: The Spirit Warrior,” is an extraordinary tale of a man’s adventure to another world; an ancient time where Indians ruled and a man’s strength, morality, and spiritual resolve are put to the test on a daily basis. David comes from a “writing” family – see his story elsewhere in this newsletter about his aunt, Phyllis Fenner, who wrote more than 50 books. His sister, Carol Fenner, was an award-winning children’s book author.

Harold Snyder, AACS 1950 graduate, has written a book of personal memories entitled “Harvest of Life.” Harold’s foreword reads, in part: “I was born in the year 1932, into a decade shaped by the Great Depression and two disastrous home fires. That my parents survived these setbacks with no insurance, no savings, and no modern mechanical means to restore foundations and buildings, seems quite incredible to me. . .” The 200-page book contains treasured memories, loving relationships, and lessons learned form a lifetime on Edgewood Farm in Alfred, NY. It is available for sale by contacting Harold C. Snyder, 1290 Randolph Rd, Alfred Station, NY 14803 or calling 607 587 8554.

Both books are available at the Almond 20th Century Club Library.
PRESERVATION GROUP TO PUBLISH BOOK ABOUT UNKNOWN FAMOUS PEOPLE

Last year, the Historical Preservation Roundtable of Allegany County printed a beautiful calendar with historical pictures from around the county. This year, the group has decided to publish a book about the “unknown famous people” from Allegany County. In an announcement sent to AHS, Jean Millman, HRPAC president, said: “We are looking for input from all Alleganians, not just members of the Roundtable. Do you have members of your family tree whose contributions enriched or improved life in our county? Are you a descendant of a trend-setter or a standard-bearer of earlier times? Are you related to founding members of a group or organization that was instrumental in building our communities? If so, this is your opportunity to help preserve their legacy for future generations.”

HRPAC is asking people to write a simple one-page article outlining the subject’s contributions and why you think they should be included in the book. Pictures, humorous anecdotes or quirky stories that will bring the personality to life is also welcomed. They also stress that concerns over writing styles, grammar or punctuation should not stop a person from making a submission, as these issues will be handled during the editing process.

“HRPAC will be accepting entries until March 15, 2010, at which time they will meet, and as a group, decide who will be included in the book which they plan to have published in the fall of 2010. Submissions may be sent to 1) Donna B. Ryan, AHS newsletter editor, PO Box 236, Almond, NY 14804 or lee_donna@frontiernet.net, 2) BRAG c/o the Bolivar Free Library, 390 Main Street, Bolivar, NY 14715, or 3) emailed to millmanj@yahoo.com

Anne McIntosh Hardy-Holley and her husband, David, were in the area recently, preparing for the sale of her father, Percy’s, home on the Hopkins Road. Stored in a shed was the McIntosh Implement sign that used to hang at their business on Main Street. Anne donated the sign to the AHS, and it has been placed on the storage shed, along with the Ray Hanks sign that has been there for several years. Next time you drive by, take a look and remember when...

OUR CONDOLENCES TO THE FRIENDS AND FAMILIES OF:

Benjamin Ernest Reynolds, 70, of Tallahassee, Florida, who passed away on September 9, 2009. A graduate of Alfred-Almond Central School, Class of 1958, he attended college at SUNY @ Delhi, and served in the United States Army and was a veteran of the Korean War. Family was truly an integral part of his life. Ben never met a stranger. He always wore a smile and was quick to talk with anyone. He was a gift to many and touched everyone he met. He was an avid fisherman, boater and hunter and enjoyed golf. Ben’s parents were the late Blanche and John Reynolds, charter members of AHS, and his dad was the author of “The Almond Story.”

Irene Hunt Hopkins Glover, 93, who died September 26, 2009 in Albany, OR, where she was living with her son, Stephen (Rebecca Jacob) Metzger. Irene graduated from the former Almond High School in 1935, where she was class president her junior and senior years. At various times she worked at the former Sweet Shop in Canisteo, and at the former Home Dairy, Loblaws and Richmyer’s stores in Hornell. Irene’s friendly personality, her sense of humor, and her ability to remember stories from Almond’s history made her a valuable resource for this newsletter. She had a large circle of friends, which, along with her family, provided a great source of pride and comfort to her. She also felt blessed to have lived such a long life in good health and of sound mind.
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AND MUCH MORE ABOUT EVERYONE'S FAVORITE SMALL TOWN—ALMOND, NY

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DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT THE AHS WEBSITE!
WWW.USGENNET.ORG/USA/ NY/TOWN/ALMOND