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www.grooms-tavern.org
Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern
 P.O. Box 1166
 Clifton Park, NY 12065



Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern

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GROOMS TAVERN GAZETTE

Fall 2008
 Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern
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Memories of the Mohawk Valley Grange

By Isabel Prescott

Grange was such an important part of my childhood, that I cannot recall my growing up years without thinking of it. As a farm family in predominantly rural Clifton Park, the grange hall was the one place, outside of church, where our whole family could get involved. Year after year, Grandma would plan out and put on programs as Lecturer, for each of the bimonthly meetings which took place on Tuesday nights in the Mohawk Valley Grange Hall in Grooms Corners. Grandpa would often act as Gate Keeper during the meetings, so that he could acknowledge the special knock and entrance password of late comers to an organization where long tradition required secretiveness amongst its members. Mom would make apple pies for covered dish and oyster suppers, and Dad would, some years, be installed as Master, a position akin to chair, someone to lead the meetings in an organization replete not only with social activities for farm families, lobbying of government, and educational information on farming, but with pageantry and pomp. Yes, our whole family was involved, and we three daughters looked forward to Grange suppers and square dances.

Oysters were a special treat back then, scalloped or stewed and served at Grange Oyster Suppers each November. The women would begin the preparation days in advance, procuring the food necessary for preparing

the menu, the same dishes served each and every year. Oyster stew to start, the seafood floating within the peppery milk base, and dished up into shallow white bowls. We girls would help serve this stew, being careful not to spill the hot contents as we reached to set the bowls ever so carefully onto the white paper-covered tables, around which a dozen people might sit. Later in the meal we would serve up casseroles of scalloped oysters, creamed potatoes, vinegary cole slaw, with pies for dessert. The room would be crowded and warm, with friendly conversation and lively camaraderie, as diners ate and talked, getting to know each other for the first time or strengthening a relationship with a previous acquaintance. The smell of brewing coffee, the enjoyment of a delicious dinner, the sound of amiable conversation, this was an opportunity to work together and to enjoy the fellowship in a farming neighborhood which otherwise offered little chance.

Saturday nights in the fall were special for all ages in the Grange community. Round and square dances were held in the Mohawk Valley Grange Hall, the music provided by the Jeske family band with a live caller, and a diversion for all. Both romantic and exciting, an occasion to laugh and enjoy life, a few moments to forget the responsibilities and problems at home, dances were just the escape that farm families needed. The floor would vibrate from the lively dancing, our skirts

would twirl with crinolines underneath as we were swung off our feet. Our lips would be silent as we listened carefully for the next call. "Duck for the oysters, duck, duck, duck, dive for the clams," the caller would announce as we reacted almost automatically to the familiar phrases, performing the patterned dance routines in concert with the seven other people in our square. As the Saturday evening came to a close before midnight, because we were not allowed to dance on Sundays, we returned home to our beds, tired and happy and still swaying to the music while humming it under our breaths. We were already envisioning ourselves swinging our partners at the upcoming dance the next month.

Yes, these times in the Grange united us, made us a community, provided us with the fellowship of a neighborhood, and most of all, gave us wonderful memories of which we can be so proud. Unquestionably, the Grange helped to give us that irreplaceable quality of life in rural Clifton Park on which our heritage has been built, and which should never be forgotten.



The Mohawk Valley Grange -2008



FRIENDS' OF HISTORIC GROOMS TAVERN LECTURE SERIES

NATIVE PERENNIAL LECTURE AT THE TAVERN BY NANCY DOUGLASS on May 3, 2008.

If you didn't get to attend the lecture on Native Perennials given by Nancy Douglass of Willow Spring Perennial Farm -- just outside the village of Vischer Ferry, you missed a great opportunity. Ms. Douglass specializes in installation of theme gardens and has large collections of both native and hybrid plants on her land. She has extensive knowledge of all things perennial, growing over 500 varieties herself.

During her presentation, Ms. Douglass shared her experiences of both propagation and enjoyment of perennials including identification, requirements for soil, light, water and space. She discussed her experience, creating habitats for attracting birds, butterflies, and other creatures.

Ms. Douglass shared her tips and advice from memory about gardening as well as clues for identifying common wildflowers in local fields and along roadways in Clifton Park. Our readily recognizable orange, roadside daylily originated in Russia in the 1100s, having now proliferated into over 60,000 hybrid varieties! Her talk was augmented with historical facts and lore. Thanks to Ms. Douglas, the audience left with a greater understanding of our native perennial flora, its history, best environments and uses today.

EARLY MAN IN CLIFTON PARK: ARCHEOLOGICAL LECTURE BY FRED STEVENS on June 29, 2008.

Fred Stevens presented his lecture to an overflow capacity crowd of inquiring minds at the Tavern on Sunday June 29, 2008. Using slides, maps and numerous ancient Indian artifacts from his extensive collection, Mr. Stevens connected our presence and surrounding geography to glaciers from the Ice Age. He discussed multiple theories about what drew the first Native Americans to this area -- and from where -- together with differing designs and carbon dating of projectile points, more commonly known as arrowheads. Many artifacts dis-

covered in the Town of Clifton Park are from the archaic period and between 3,000 and 10,000 years old.

Mr. Stevens recounted his own experience, developing and enjoying what he termed the "treasure hunt" instinct as a child growing up. While excavating and preparing land for a large garden in his own backyard, he discovered some 5,000 artifacts on his property, alone. Mr. Stevens serves on the Board of Iroquois Indian Museum and supervises the Archeological Department which is investigating several pre-historic sites in the Schoharie Creek watershed. He is an active volunteer with NYS Museum, Southern Adirondack project, and member and officer of other New York and national archeological organizations. A number of attendees were interested in further information about his current digs. The talk was covered in the June 30th issue of the Schenectady Daily Gazette.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! NEXT LECTURE:

"Clifton Park's Waterfront: An Historical Perspective" will be presented by Clifton Park Town Historian John Scherer at 7 PM on Friday October 3, 2008 at the Historic Grooms Tavern. The town's southern border is along the Mohawk River providing almost 13 miles of waterfront. The northern borders of the town touch on Ballston Lake and Round Lake and the Stony Creek Reservoir is completely within the town. The presentation will explore how residents used this waterfront over time, from first settlement to present day. Chief among the uses were for transportation, industry and recreation. Vintage photographs will highlight the importance of the river and lakes to the history of Clifton Park.

John Scherer is an advisory member of the Board of Directors for the Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern and Town of Clifton Park Historic Preservation Commission. He was instrumental in founding the Clifton Park Historic Preservation Commission and served as its first chairman. He has been Historian for the Town of Clifton Park since 1978. Mr. Scherer is senior Historian at the New York State Museum representing the Commissioner of Education on the State Board for Historic Preservation. He has been curator of decorative arts at the New York State Museum since 1967.

Come join us! The lecture is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.



The progress we have seen at the Tavern from the images in the top two pictures as it was in 1999 through the restoration phase to current state is a tribute the support of the Friends of Historic Grooms Tavern, its members and their partners, the Town of Clifton Park. And yet there is still more to be done with your help.

The Friend's Calendar of Events At The Tavern

- Sept 25 7:00 PM FOHGT Board Meeting @ The Tavern—All are invited
- Oct 3 7:00PM—Annual Meeting followed by "Clifton Park's Waterfront: An Historical Perspective," Lecture by John Scherer, Clifton Park Town Historian. All are invited to bring a friend
- Nov 24 7:00 PM FOHGT Board Meeting @ The Tavern—All are invited
- Dec 14 Open House, reception, holiday concert, holiday lecture on antique ornaments -watch for upcoming details

THE FRIENDS OF HISTORIC GROOMS TAVERN*

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Alexandra Verrigni
Gary & Marilyn Watson
Sharon Witman
Thomas & Alene Zetterstrom
Clifton Knolls Civic Association

* For errors and omissions please contact Alex @ 518-384-3994

Please feel free to promote our membership to others your know because we are interested in expanding our membership base. We wish to thank all members whose ongoing support has assisted in making possible the following projects:

- ◆ Purchase and installation of Phase 1 of a perennial garden at the Tavern
- ◆ Purchase a period exterior light fixture for the side of the Tavern along Grooms Road.
- ◆ Obtain a landscaping design for the Tavern along the Grooms Road side.

Cliff Hughes of SEASONS SUPPLY CO., 852 Grooms Road, Rexford, has generously contributed Belgian stone, mulch and top soil for the landscaping project along Grooms Road. Nancy Douglass of WILLOW SPRING PERENNIAL FARMS in Vischers Ferry and STONE SOUP ANTIQUE SHOP in Ballston Spa has generously contributed her labor installing Phase 1 of our perennial garden at the Tavern. SEASONS SUPPLY is a professional supply center providing, not limited to, the following landscaping materials: natural wall stone, decorative gravels, retaining walls, flag and blue-stone, mulches and soils. Nancy Douglass also affiliates with STONE SOUP ANTIQUE SHOP. We encourage you to patronize SEASONS SUPPLY CO., WILLOW SPRING PERENNIAL FARMS and STONE SOUP ANTIQUE SHOP!

We have had inordinate difficulty obtaining a craftsman both interested AND available to restore our outhouse. If you or someone you know would like to discuss the project and/or submit a proposal, please contact: Alexandra Verrigni, President, tel. 399.2446. Thank you, again!