

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Welcome Spring
- Family Fun Day Planned
- Community Organized Events C.O.V.E.
- Looking forward to Summer VBS
- A Word from The Code Office
- Cortland Free Library Budget Vote

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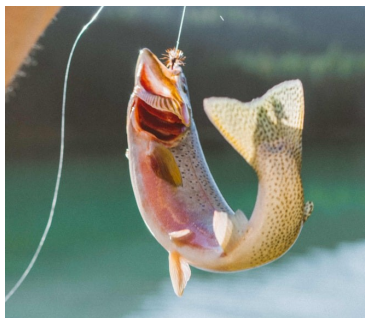
Town of Virgil News

VOLUME VIII ISSUE I

SPRING 2023

Public Hearing on the Proposed Senior Living Center

Save the date there will be a public hearing on the proposed Senior Living and Community Center on Thurs April 27th 2023 at 7:00 PM at the Virgil Town Hall. Developer Steve Terwilliger from Kajen LLC will present the proposed site before the Virgil Planning Board at this meeting. The public hearing is being held so that anyone wishing to speak for or against the project may attend the public hearing. The agenda and supporting documentation is available on the Town of Virgil's website www.verilny.org. Please call or text Alane Van Donsel the Virgil Town Clerk at 607-749-0038 if you have any questions.



Community Organized Virgil Events

C.O.V.E. (Community Organized Virgil Events) will be hosting The Family Fun Day again this year on June 17, 2023, from 11 am to 3 pm at Hope Lake Park. There is no cost to attend. There will be face painting, a bounce house, other games, a fishing derby for children under 16 years old, and a food truck with food for purchase. We could use volunteers for the bounce house and fishing derby. If interested, please show up at our COVE meeting May 8 at 6:30 pm at the Virgil Town Hall or contact Jeff Hall at hallshill@yahoo.com. Thanks!

Cortland Free Library Budget Vote May 16

When you think of the library, what comes to mind? Books, books, and more books? Yes, Cortland Free Library—your library (chartered to serve the towns of Virgil and Cortlandville in addition to the city of Cortland)—has lots of books, and we're proud of our collection. However, "Books are just the beginning" is our slogan for a reason: books are just the beginning of what you'll find here, and just the beginning of what libraries are about.

Libraries are about literacy, education, and discovery. Here, you can borrow NYS Parks passes, puzzles, video games, graphic novels, eBooks, magazines, Wonderbooks, DVDs, and so much more. Book clubs, storytimes, Teen Time, and many other programs are held here, for free—there's truly something for all ages. We also have a Dial-a-Story service you can call to listen to stories and poems, and a Mail-It service for patrons who are homebound.

Libraries are about community needs and partnerships. For example, April's Community Read is happening thanks to the Mental Health Association and our

partners the Cortland LGBTQ Center, CAPCO, and Hillside/Cortland County Foster Parent Training/Recruiting. Libraries are also about growth. We have submitted a NYS Construction Aid grant application that, if awarded, will (among other projects) expand our elevator to improve access to the Art Gallery and North and West mezzanines; add a new HVAC system to the Main Reading Room; and create dedicated spaces for a Community Room, Teen Space, and Makerspace.

How do we fund library operations? Materials (including books), furniture, fixtures, etc. are funded by a trustee endowment. Operating expenses—the larger chunk of the budget that includes payroll and building expenses—come from taxes. We are also partially funded by grants, charitable contributions, fundraising, and support from the Friends of the Library.

On Tuesday, May 16, the library's budget will be on the same ballot as the Cortland City School District for your vote. For the first time, we are asking

more than a 2% increase. We want you to understand what that means, so to learn more about our budget, expenses, history of our funding structure, reasons behind the increase, and exciting projects on the horizon, please visit <https://cortlandfreelibrary.org/funding-value/>

Last but not least, we'd love to hear what you'd like to see at the library. What services or programs are of the most interest to you? How can we do more to bring the library to you? Please email me at director@cortlandfreelibrary.org to share your thoughts and questions.



Exterior of the Cortland Free Library



“Farming up on those hills was a hardscrabble existence. The backbreaking work of clearing the trees was done by 1870, but the fertile forest soil, with no tree roots to hold it in place, was washing down the hills during every rainstorm.”

The Leech Family of Virgil by Val Ross

I hike a lot in the surrounding State Forests. It's fascinating to realize that those woods were once clear-cut and farmed, with evidence of the old farmsteads remaining in vinca, apple trees, and rock piles. The Public Forest Access Roads were once main thoroughfares for horse-drawn conveyances. I thought it would be interesting to feature one such farm in this newsletter. I looked at the Virgil map from 1876 and selected a farm labeled “E. Leech” on Pipeline Road, right across from where the blue-blazed spur path takes you down to the Finger Lakes trail. I hadn't previously noted remnants of a farm there, except for a low stone wall here and there along the dirt road.

Looking at the 1870 census records and a very complete family history on ancestry.com, I can see one Leech family on that road. There was mother Rebecca B. Leech, aged 45, with kids Mary Clarissa, Edward Payne, Sarah Bethia, and George Randolph. The farm must have legally belonged to the adult son Edward by 1870, as women were not regarded as capable farm owners back then. Using the old map, it's not hard to walk up in the woods a bit to find the old homesite.

Walking up to the flat plateau you find a rectangular depression with some rock walls remaining. It looks like they had a root cellar separated off from the rest of the dirt cellar.

I found a couple of rusted-out bottomless pans in the dirt of the floor that certainly would have belonged to the household—not the type of thing hunters or picknickers would leave behind. The blue-swirl enamelware was very popular in the mid-1800s. Glass was melted onto the metal to make pretty designs, and get rid of the metallic taste in the food. Think of the meals the Leeches made in these pans.

Once you're at the site of the house, you can see a faint track where they accessed home from

the road. There is no wood scattered around to suggest that the house fell in, so I guess it was either moved or repurposed or it burned.

Rebecca Luce was born 1 June 1824 in Virgil, and married Amos E. Leech around 1845. Their eldest child, Mary Clarissa, was born in 1846. Amos died on August 25, 1859 at the age of 46, leaving his wife Rebecca with a farm and 4 children under the age of 13 to care for.

Here's a fascinating little tidbit I've never encountered before: Amos E. Leech has TWO separate grave markers! His body was buried in Virgil's Pioneer Cemetery after his death in 1859. His grave will be familiar to anyone who has been on Marsha Powell's Halloween Tour—one of the well-preserved metal markers with a hand pointing toward heaven.

I have wondered why people didn't use the metal markers more, since they seem to hold up so well. Perhaps here is the answer: they couldn't be amended to include other family members. When Rebecca died, the family must have wanted to include Amos's name with Rebecca and other family members on a single stone, so they put up another stone with Amos E. Leech's name and dates in the Forest Hill Cemetery up behind the church at Blodgett Mills! Has anyone else encountered a person with TWO graveyard headstones? That has to be somewhat unusual.

The stone also has the son Edward, who owned the Pipeline Road farm, and his wife, and some more modern Leeches.

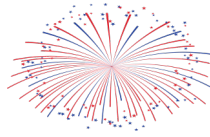
Farming up on those hills was a hardscrabble existence. The back-breaking work of clearing the trees was done by 1870, but the fertile forest soil, with no tree roots to hold it in place, was washing down the hills during every rainstorm. Crops got more and more puny as the years went on, as farmers didn't know many techniques for soil preservation. Rocks must have seemed to grow from the ground, and had to be picked and thrown every planting season.

Livestock grazed the bare hills, fenced in by rock piles and flimsy barbed wire you can still see stuck in the middle of big old sugar maples, oaks, ash, and black cherry. Most of the farms, like Rebecca's, were placed near streams which almost always ran dry in the hot summers. Wells were shallow and must have been muddy and contaminated with animal run-off. They were tough people! Life was hard work. In the decades to come, those farms became untenable and were eventually bought by the State and reforested. What we experience up in those State Forests now is what the early pioneers found when they staked out their homesteads. I like to imagine what I would do first to get a homestead started. “Head to Lowe's” was not an option in the early 1800s. They probably had had an ax, a hand saw, a shovel, and a fair amount of desperation if winter was approaching.

Rebecca's children would have attended the small schoolhouse seen on the 1876 map at what is now the intersection of Clute Road and Vinnedge Road. I can imagine them taking the long walk to school through lots of snow in the winter. Maybe they were lucky and had a horse and sleigh to take them. Winter was the easiest time to travel back then—no mud!-- and the first big snow was greeted joyfully. Those roads were populated back then. The Leech kids would have passed by sheep, cows, fences, chickens, fields, gardens and buildings belonging to the Evanses and the Lowes on their way to school. There were likely many other kids (the Woodens and Downses) who joined them as they made their way to the schoolhouse. Nowadays they would walk by trees, trees and more trees.

The eldest daughter was Mary Clarissa Leech. She was born in 1846 and died at age 29 in 1875. She was a bright student, as described in her obituary, and became a teacher.

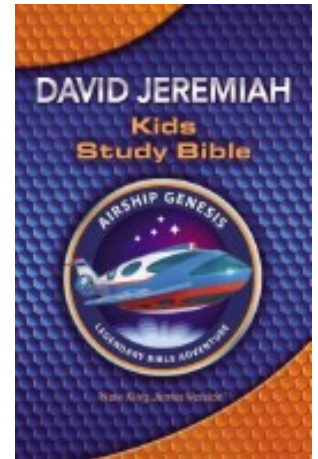
Virgil Fireworks July 2023



Mark your calendars as the Town of Virgil will once again be hosting the annual Independence Day Fireworks in July 2023. The event will be held on July 3rd at 9:00 PM at Hope Lake Park. We hope many of you can make it to this fun family event.

VBS 2023 Virgil UMC

The Virgil United Methodist Church will hold the annual Vacation Bible School from June 26 to June 30 2023 from 9AM-Noon. Stellar VBS is going to be full of Bible adventures, games, music, snacks, fist bumps, and crafts. But we're doing more than simply entertaining kids. We have a powerful purpose at the heart of every single activity: Helping students experience Jesus' love. Each participant will receive an Airship Genesis Study Bible!
Do you want to be an important part of making that happen?
Would you like to be the hands and hearts of God, shining his incredible love for each of them? To volunteer or for more information contact: Gayle Kryger 607-229-2671 GayleKryger2033@gmail.com



The Virgil Community Has Lost Several Members of Our Community



The Town of Virgil Has lost several members of our community in the last couple years. Every loss leaves us with a sense that a part of our community is missing. Most recently Lee, also known as Arnie, passed away.

Lee was a lifelong resident of Virgil. He was part of the last graduating classes of the Virgil Central School before Virgil merged with the Cortland Enlarged School District. Lee served at the Cortland County Sheriff's Department for 47 years. Twelve of those years he was the Sheriff. He spent his retirement serving the Virgil community by volunteering at the food bank, hanging up the American around town and helping his neighbors whenever he could. The family will receive friends from 1:00 to 3:00 Wednesday April 26, 2023, at the Virgil Methodist Church with services to follow.

Last year the Town of Virgil Lost Gene King Sr. Gene faithfully served the Virgil Community for 68 years. He was a lifelong member of the Virgil Fire Department. Gene was assigned to many roles such as an Assistant Chief, Chief, Fire Commissioner and Fire Police. Gene was steadfast in his devotion. Gene had an impact on at least 3 generations of firefighters throughout his years of service.

Gene always had a story of the old days and made you want to go back to see how different the fire service was. Gene also served as a bailiff for the Virgil Courts for many years. He also was instrumental in distributing the 911



Wilma Kaminski, also known as Wilma Dryden, was a member of the Virgil Community for 64 years. Wilma was a pillar in our community. She worked at Greek Peak in the early years, and she educated and trained younger people in the art of food preparation.



She showed her love and support for those in the community at all levels and she was always ready to serve. She volunteered with the Virgil Senior Citizens Group & the Virgil Church. She helped with VBS, She was always on hand to prepare for the quarterly clothing give-away. Al and Gayle Kryger said, "Wilma served her Lord and taught others to deal with life's challenges at all levels. Wilma was a great friend and we will miss her." Our Community lost several other members of our community in the past years, if you would like for your loved one to be honored in an upcoming newsletter, please let us know.

COVID FUNDS COMMITTEE

The Virgil Town Board has appointed a COVID Funds Committee to discuss options for the Federal COVID relief funds that the town received. This is a grant that can be used to benefit the community, although the money can not be used to lower taxes. The Committee will be looking at ideas that will benefit a majority of the community. The committee welcomes input from you. If you have any ideas on a great way to use the COVID funds which amounts to around \$240,000, please contact the Virgil Town Clerk Alane Van Donsel at townclerk@virgilNY.org
There is talk that unused funds may need to be given back to the Federal Government. We would like to use the funds in order to make out town an even better place to live. Thank you in advance for your input.

Request from the Virgil Historical Society

The Virgil Historical Society is requesting photos or information on old schoolhouses in The Town of Virgil. According to a 1876 map of Virgil there were NINETEEN school houses scattered across Virgil. Val Ross and Laurie Tebbe have taken an interest in pinpointing where they were and they are collecting photos and or stories about them. They have already visited 4 of the sites and they are wondering if two of the houses on Rte. 11 may have had old schools incorporated into them. There is one on W River Rd has a crude stone foundation left. Please send any info to Val at valerie.ross49@gmail.com or you can drop off the information at Virgil Town Hall! Thank you



Town of Virgil

The Virgil Town Hall
1176 Church Street
Virgil, NY 13045

Phone: 607-835-6174

Fax: 607-835-6668

**We're here to serve you. Visit
our website at:**

www.Virgilny.org



VISA



Virgil Town Supervisor: John Kaminski
Deputy Supervisor: Jereme Stiles
Town Council Members: Eric Snow
Gary Pelton
Matt Denniston

The Town Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month. Meetings start at 6:30 P.M.

- Town Clerk/Collector: Alane Van Donsel
- Deputy Clerk: Debra Marrotte
- Town's Bookkeeper: Shannon Doubet
- Town Accountant: Colin Cahill
- Town Justice: Mack Cook
- Highway Superintendent: Britt Morse
- Animal Control Officer: Lindsay Kemp
- Town Assessor: Brian Fitts
- Town Attorney: Daniel Ellis II, Esq.
- Code Enforcement: Kevin McMahon
- Zoning Officer Adam Brown
- County Legislator: Sandy Price
- Town Historian: Marsha Powell

A Message From the Codes Office

The Virgil Codes office would like to send out a message to all Virgil residents. Please make sure you check with the codes office before starting any projects, especially roofing projects. This will save you time, money, and aggravation down the road. Some projects require permits, and some do not, but it is better to find out ahead of time before diving into a project and finding out later that a permit was required. Also, the Virgil Codes office would like to thank residents who keep their properties neat and tidy. Our officers are still struggling with some residents who do not keep their properties maintained and those who have junk cars. If you fall into this category, please consider cleaning up your property. Our Codes office is here to work with you. Please call Adam Brown and or Kevin McMahon at 607-835-6174 Ext. 3 anytime. If no one answers, please leave a message and one of our officers will call you back shortly. Thank you so much for your attention to this matter.

Proposed Chicken Law

You may remember an article in the 2022 Fall Newsletter regarding the Chicken Law, well that law was never passed. The proposed Law brought on much discussion and some misunderstanding. Some folks think that Virgil's elected Officials are trying to make it more difficult to own chickens, when, they are trying to make it easier. According to the current Zoning Law, you are not allowed to keep chickens anywhere in the Town of Virgil if you do not own at least five acres. Now this does not mean you can't get chickens, but it does mean that unless you petitioned that Virgil Zoning Board for a Variance, you are not in compliance. The fee to appear before the Zoning Board is \$275.00. Many folks were upset to learn that they were out of compliance, especially if they live in a neighborhood residential area. The proposed Local Law, named "Keeping of Chickens" is intended to allow many residents to keep chickens within the Town, without having to go through the variance process, provided they follow the rules of the Local Law. This law has been discussed at many town board meetings and they have already held a public hearing on the matter. The Town Board has recently began discussion on the matter again.

School Board Elections

and Budget Votes

The 2023 School Budget and Board of Education Votes will all be held on May 16th, 2023. With in the Town of Virgil there are residents living in four different school districts.

Residents of Virgil living in the Cortland Enlarged City School District will be voting at the Virgil Town Hall from NOON to 9:00 PM.

If you reside in the Dryden Central School District voting will take place at the Middle School-High School auditorium from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

Folks residing in the Marathon School district vote at the Marathon High School room 107 from noon to 9:00 PM.

Finally if you reside in the McGraw Central School District voting will District voting will be held in the High School Auditorium from noon to 8:00 PM.

Hope this information is helpful. It can be very confusing having four different school districts with voting held at different times. For more information call the school district in which you reside.