

Between the Lakes

A Newsletter of the
Interlaken Historical Society

Volume 34, No. 2 October 2008

www.InterlakenHistory.org



*Women working with corn
from the collection of Margaret Smith*

IHS October Program

October 27, 2008 7:30 p.m.
Town of Covert Municipal Building
South Main Street

Amazing Maize:

America's Gift to the World

Margaret E. Smith of Cornell University will be the guest speaker, emphasizing breeding for productivity and adaptation to New York growing conditions, improving insect and disease resistance, adapting varieties to more sustainable production systems, breeding for organic systems, and exploring farmer-participatory plant breeding. Ms. Smith came to Cornell University in 1987 as a faculty member in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics focusing on corn breeding. Her research is primarily on field corn, but also includes work on sweet corn. Until spring 2002, she taught a course on genetic improvement of crop plants. From 1998 until 2001, Margaret served as the Associate Director for Cornell Cooperative Extension in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Beginning in 2008, she served as Associate Director for the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station.

Her faculty appointment was re-focused on research and extension beginning in 2001, and since that time she has served as the Department Extension Leader. In her extension role she conducts educational programs for agricultural audiences on crop varieties and seeds, and on plant genetic engineering for diverse public audiences. Before coming to Cornell, Margaret worked for several years in Latin America, first as a plant breeder at the Tropical Agriculture Center for Research and Teaching in Turrialba, Costa Rica, and later as a corn breeder at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in Texcoco, Mexico. The focus of her work in both of these positions was on improving crop varieties for small-scale and subsistence farmers in the tropics -a research interest she maintains to date. She currently collaborates on research and/or educational projects in Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, and Thailand.

The program is open to the public and refreshments will be served. The Municipal Building is the former American Legion Home. For more information contact Allan Buddle at orchardland@zoom-dsl.com or 532-4213.

President's Message

The weather can make or break an outdoor event such as the Society's Plowing Day and Old Fashioned Fair on September 20th. This time we were lucky as about three hundred smiling attendees of all ages enjoyed a beautiful fall day hearing about the history of our fairs, talking with exhibitors and each other, and watching a plowing demonstration that turned over 16 acres of corn stubble by the time it was done.

After enjoying some of that good "fair food" provided by the Interlaken Community Action Group, everyone was treated to a parade of all the plowing equipment including a Case 50 hp steam tractor which started the parade with a blast of its whistle, only slightly upsetting Heidi, Suzanne Messmer's milk goat. Jennifer Persoon's calf could have cared less and slept through the whole thing. The parade, a last minute suggestion by John Hunt, turned out to be one of the highlights of the day. Everyone loves a parade.

Once again this great community of ours came together for a special day celebrating our history in memory of David Powell, a very important member. I heard someone say "I bet Dave is smiling down on this gathering of his family and John Deere tractors." Speaking of smiling, I saw a smile on Don Betzler's face. He was in his element organizing the plowing.

How many volunteers did it take to put this program together? The planning committee included Harold and Barbara Stewart, Marty Schlabach, Mary Jean Welser, John Hunt, Don Betzler and Diane Bassette Nelson. After that I lost count, but you all know who you are, how much you contributed and how much it is appreciated. In particular we want to thank Dick Peterson for the history of the fairs, a piece of our culture that has continued on for over 150 years, and Gould Colman for narrating the parade and the plowing demonstration. Gould was the first to take the handles of the walking plow behind Michelle Paul's team of Belgian draft horses.

John Hunt worked long and hard to get his family's barn ready for this event but the person who probably worried the most was Jack Persoon. Jack volunteered his corn field for the plowing. Two or three days before the event, the field still had standing corn on it. I wasn't worried.

So, thank you one and all, those who helped and those who came to enjoy the day. We couldn't have done it without you.



Heidi with friend Jessica Persoon



Never too young to start driving a tractor.

New Members

Nancy Radloff, Interlaken, NY
John & Delle Mehling, Interlaken, NY
Jackie Howe, Livermore, CO
Cristy Updike, Interlaken, NY

New Life Members

Americana Vineyards, Interlaken, NY
Jean Currie, Interlaken, NY
Don Warne, Romulus, NY
Jean Powell, Interlaken, NY

Donations to the Society

Collection of books and pamphlets for the Agriculture and Rural Life Library given by John and Anne Knight, Interlaken

An 1888 child's tea service in the original box given by Priscilla Weir, Doylestown, PA

Book of Gospel Hymns, 1891, used by the Covert Baptist Church Sunday School from Margaret Huckle, Trumansburg

Photograph of the interior of the Interlaken train depot, 1914, from Doris Tulla

Bell, flags and stand, gavel, histories and assorted papers from the American Legion Auxiliary, Interlaken

Secretary's minutes and albums from the Green Thumb Garden Club, Interlaken

Large American flag, 48 stars, initialed JKW 1921, from the American Legion, Interlaken

Monetary Donations

Anne C. Miller, Covington, PA
Margaret Lorenz, Arlington, VA

Thank you to all of our donors!

Historical Society Calendar 2009

The 2009 calendar has photographs, pen & ink drawings, engravings from a variety of topics, and even old fashioned valentines like the one shown below. You can also revisit the events of 2008 including the opening of the new museum and plowing day. Calendars will be available at the October 27th meeting, from Trustees of the Historical Society, through several of the local merchants and by mail. If you need to order your calendars you can use the insert in this newsletter, or print a copy of the order form from the website at

www.interlakenhistory.org/gifts.html

We still have 2006, 2007 and 2008 calendars available if you didn't get a copy or need another to share with a friend or relative.



RED DOT ALERT

July 1st began the new fiscal year for the Society. Dues for 2008-2009 should be paid at this time. If a RED DOT is on your address label, that means you owe dues. Please see the insert to the newsletter for specifics. Thank you!

Library News

by Pat Moore

After a long hard struggle, the papers have been signed and our new addition is a “go.” We are having Senator Nozzolio come for a ground breaking ceremony soon.

Pre-K classes are again coming to the library for story times. Mrs. Schaffner is the story lady this year. She is great with the kids as she was a teacher for many years. Our stories in September were about apples. We made an apple puppet for the craft project with a foam worm. There are 19 children in each class. In October we will be hearing about leaves and will have a project featuring leaves. Jennifer Gray is hoping to have some of her literacy little folks come to our library once a month, we look forward to having them here.

Our DVDs and videos can be checked out for only five days. The fine is \$1.00 per day per item if it is overdue. Please be sure to return your items on time so others can enjoy them...and so you don't have to pay the fine. We have many new books for your enjoyment. Some of the new books on CDs are: *Harvesting*, Jodi Picoult; *The Front* by Patricia Cornwell, *The Overlook* by Michael Connelly; and *Critical* by Robin Cook. Our books and magazines may be checked out for two weeks. These items may be renewed online at iinter-la@rochester.rr.com (please note the double “i”). You will need the last four digits of your telephone number and your library card.

Our genealogy resources were used quite a lot this summer. It is always fun talking with the folks who come from all over the country doing research. Sometimes we even get people from other countries, such as this summer when people

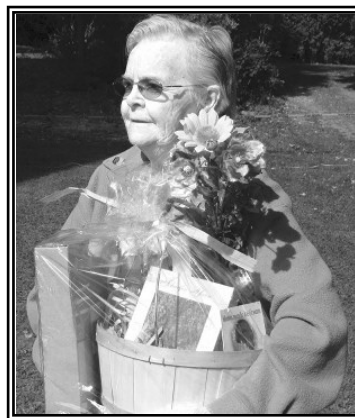
from Switzerland were here.

We would like to welcome Jennifer Persoon as a library volunteer. If you are interested in volunteering please call me at the library (532-4341). Volunteers are hard to come by. Thank you to all of the ones who help keep the library going.

A personal note: I would like to say “thanks for a job well done” for the Historical Society’s Plowing Day and Old Fashioned Fair. It surely brought back memories from my days long ago. I was thrilled to have won one of the gift baskets. It was great to see so many local folks out for the festivities on such a gorgeous day.

Happy Fall.

Pat Moore holds her gift basket. Thank you Barb Stewart and our donors for making the “Made in Interlaken & Covert Baskets” possible. One of the baskets will travel to Canada when the winners return to Seneca County later this year and picks up their basket.



Something Different on the Cayuga Wine Trail

New York's Awesome Apple History

Thousands of visitors pass along the Cayuga Wine Trail each year to sample the products of the many estate wineries and to enjoy the atmosphere and scenic vistas that the Finger Lakes area has to offer.

One stop along the trail is a little different. Bellwether Hard Cider offers several styles of hard cider made from varieties of heirloom apples that were popular in the 1800s including Northern Spy, Golden Russet, Baldwin and Tompkins King. These apple varieties, along with many others, are still grown here.

Capturing the historical aspect, Bellwether and the Interlaken Historical Society worked together to create an exhibit at the cidery demonstrating the degree of involvement of our community in the apple industry in the 19th century.

On September 21, visitors were greeted by Mary Jean Welser and Marty Schlabach who discussed their display of 29 varieties of heirloom apples they had gathered at the USDA orchards at the Geneva Experiment Station and several regional orchards. Mary Jean is a horticulturalist at the Experiment Station and also a trustee of the Interlaken Historical Society. Marty is director of the library at the Station with access to the extensive literature on apple culture.

At the end of the day Bill and Cheryl Barton, owners and operators of Bellwether, related some of the comments from visitors, mostly about memories of earlier times making cider in the backyard or joining other families to pick apples and take them to the local cider mill for pressing. All remembered being surprised at how many gallons of cider they got from their few bushels of apples and how soon it started to “work.”

Nearly every farmstead in the 1800s had a few apple trees to provide fruit for the family living there. From *Child's Business Directory of Seneca County 1894-'95*, we learned that there were also 130 commercial orchards in the Town of Covert at that time ranging in size from 1 acre to 60 acres scattered throughout the town as illustrated on the photo below showing the location and number of acres of apple trees.

Supporting production from these orchards were 5 apiaries, 4 wooden barrel and apple crate manufacturers, several warehouses for storage and an evaporator build-



ing on Cayuga Street in Farmer, the name of Interlaken at that time. Dried apples were shipped to city markets on the railroad. There was a cider mill located just north of the townline at Footes Corners. Most likely there were many small cider presses throughout the town.

The Diary of Herman T. Smith, 1886, supports that assumption.

October 7 – Quite a pleasant day. I picked apples. Mrs. Medlock and Morris came down and spent the evening. Let them have four bushels of wheat. A man

Continued on page 9

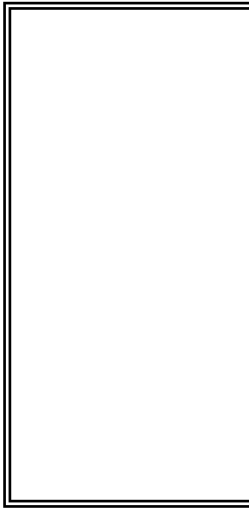
Apples

Continued from page 5

from Trumansburg came here and commenced to bottom chairs. Got four completed.

October 13 – A pleasant day. Unloaded the potatoes which I dug Saturday and buried them in the garden. Commenced to pick up cider apples. John helped T.C. Tunison today. Picked up all the apples (which

Plowing Day 2008 What a day to Remember!



Tea
Alla
gro

Bob Thompson and his John Deere 8420
with Salford 7-bottom plow.

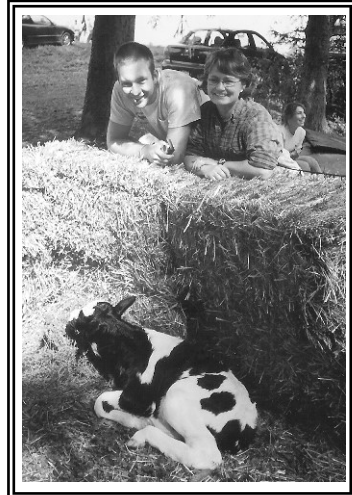


In the barn, members of Black Sheep Hand Spinning Society, Charlotte Sharkey, and Jean Currie demonstrate spinning techniques. A display was this Seneca County Extension display.



Fruits and vegetables on display in the barn

Eric Hunt & Jennifer Persoon check on Jen's calf in her hay bale pen.



Teamster Michelle Paul driving her Belgian draft horses with Allan Buddle on the handles of the walking plow. In the background the tractors wait their turn.



If it looks like you are seeing the field from above, you are. Eric Hunt was 70 feet up in the silo taking pictures of the plowing.



Spinners Guild: Anne Furman, spinning. Among the many displays.



Pictures from the Plowing Day shown in this issue are courtesy of the Hunt family, Connie Kindig, Barb Stewart & Diane Nelson.

Amazing Maize: America's Gift to the World

by Margaret E. Smith

Maize (or corn) was originally domesticated by the peoples of Mesoamerica about 7,000 years ago. From its origin with the dawn of settled agriculture in the Americas, it has come to be one of the most widely cultivated crops in the world, a staple food source for many, a major source of animal feed, and more recently a major source of biofuel, among a plethora of other uses. Maize cultivation was the basis of Native American agriculture throughout New York and many other areas of the country, and its cultivation continues to be a staple of New York agriculture today.

In talking about this amazing crop, we will explore its domestication from teosinte, a seemingly unpromising source of food. It really took only a handful of key genes to transform teosinte into a crop with all the essential features of maize. The relationship of humans with maize raises the fascinating question of who really domesticated who – did humans domesticate maize or has maize effectively domesticated us? Whatever the answer, it is clear that this grain has found a niche in many cultures and climates. It spread early on throughout the Americas, and very rapidly spread worldwide through



transoceanic and transcontinental exploration and trade.

Maize cultivation by the Iroquois in Seneca County was extensive. It served not only as a food, but also was used for ceremonial and ornamental purposes in Iroquois society. Indeed, the destruction of maize crops became the focus of campaigns by the newly independent colonies against the Native Americans in this region. They deemed it more efficient to eliminate the source of people's sustenance rather than try to hunt down and kill the people themselves. It is difficult to fathom the quantities of maize and other agricultural products that were destroyed at this time. Ironically, in light of this history, maize cultivation was extensively re-established in this area by European settlers, based on the same genetic materials that had been developed by the Native Americans.

The complex, intimate, and many-faceted relationship between humans and maize continues to this day. Globally, the importance of maize as a staple food ranks together with that of rice and wheat. Recent events that have tightened markets for these staple grains and raised their prices have had economic repercussions worldwide. The effects of these shifts on food prices right here in New York serve to highlight the pervasive presence of maize in our diet, even though we often don't recognize it. As Mar-

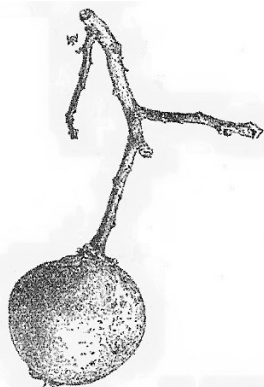
Quince — The Forgotten Fruit

by Barbara B. Stewart

In June of 1972, my husband, Harold, our one year old son, Chuck and I moved to Interlaken. Some may remember the flood that heavily effected the Southern Tier that June. Our “new home” was some 70-years young and along with the “needs” of an older home, we were blessed with many well established plant materials. Many have survived to this day.

In 1972 our backyard was home to four quince trees. They had already bloomed and fruit was forming. As the summer continued, we became friends with backyard neighbors, Bob and Frankie Hichock. When they learned that I worked at Cornell’s Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture, Bob was glad to share some handed down history of the block. Apparently, much of the land East of Prospect Street toward Lake View, and beyond, were orchards. Yes, there were apples, but at one time it was largely quince trees. It must have been beautiful in the spring, as the blossoms are white and pale pink. This would have been around the late 1800s. Due to the large amount of pectin the fruit contains, it was used largely to preserve jams, jellies, and other canned items. (1, 2)

It might be interesting to learn a bit more of the history of the quince. The



quince has been around a long time. History traces the origins to Smyrna, Turkey. Evidence has been found in the lost city of Pompeii, Italy. The ancient Greeks developed and grafted quince trees but only recently has science produced hybridized fruit, yielding a softer and juicier flesh.

It is most likely Adam tasted a quince, not an apple. Apples arrived at a much later date. Hybrids are grown in the Deep South where migrant Mexican workers buy the fruit to satisfy the Latin palate. (2)

Let’s learn more about the quince industry in NYS. H. L. Brown of Waterfort Orleans County writes in 1922, “the value of choosing good well - drained clay loam on high land is best for tree development.” He notes the quince is very tender in bud and blossom, hence susceptible to late spring frosts. With proper fertilization 200-300 pounds of fruit per acre could be realized. The fruit would be marketed in barrels. The profit line compares favorable with apples. (3)

There are other interesting facts to be explored, and we will continue the story in the next newsletter. If any reader has stories or recipes they would like to share, please feel free to contact me. I would like to use them next time.

My thanks to Mary Jean Welser and Marty Schlabach for use of their time and their library.

1. Brown’s Berry Patch: History of The Brown Family Farm
2. History of Quince Web Garden Guide

3. Agricultural Bulletin #147 The Fruit Industry in NYS Nov. 1922



Lee MacLaren with his collection of model steam engines.

David Nielsen's "Hit & Miss"



engine attached to a corn Sheller.

News of Our Neighbors

Ovid Historical Society

Ovid's Antique Road Show, October 20, 2008 7 P.M., Ovid Historical Society Museum, Main Street, Ovid. Steve Wagner and Sarah Dawley will appraise up to three of your antiques.

Historic Building Tour

October 17, 2008 6 to 9 PM Candlelight

October 18, 2008 10 AM to 3 PM

Self Guided Tour starting at the Ovid Historical Society Museum. Maps will be available at the Museum.

Lodi Historical Society

December 7, 4 P.M. Sixth annual Swamp College Brass Quintet holiday concert. Two trumpets, one tuba, one trombone and a French horn combine for a rousing variety of popular and new compositions. Free admission. Reception. Contributions welcome. Phone (607) 582-6077 for information.



Mark Powell drives one of the Maple Leaf Farm John Deere tractors to lead the parade of tractors at the Plowing Day and Old Fashioned Fair. More photographs from the event are shown throughout the newsletter.

Mark your calendar

October 27: "Amazing Maize: America's Gift to the World" by Margaret Smith at the Covert Municipal Building, Main Street, Interlaken

Is there a Red Dot on your address label?

See page 3 for details.

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