

Fly Creeker

NEWSLETTER of the FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FCAHS)

[www:https://flycreekareahistoricalsociety.org](https://flycreekareahistoricalsociety.org)

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VOLUME 38, ISSUE 3 * SUMMER, 2026

NEWS BRIEFS

- **Milestone ...** This is the 150th edition of the *Fly Creeker* since it was started in Summer, 1989.
- **Membership Has Privileges ...** At our April meeting, members decided that future meeting programs would continue to be free for members, but that we would request free-will donations from non-members. We have also began offering member discounts for our special events, like the Country Breakfast. We hope this incentivizes people to join and remain with our Society.
- **Open House ...** Archives Committee Chairman Kevin Brogle will have our museum and archives open for visitors on Sunday, August 9, from 11 AM to 2 PM. He hopes to do this more often in the future.
- **Newbies ...** Welcome (or welcome back, in some cases) to our newest members, Ted Buhl (contributing/sustaining), Allen & Darlene Hazen, Neal McManus, Edward Rowley, and the Sullivan family!
- **Breakfa\$t ...** Our May 3 Country Breakfast broke all previous records, grossing \$2,416 (plus \$154 from the raffle). Thanks to Tony and Sharon Kroker, and all the volunteers and donors (including the Fly Creek General Store, Fly Creek Cider Mill, Stewart's, Hannaford, and Walmart) – not to mention all the generous patrons – who made this such a success. If we hold a fall breakfast (see page 2), it will be on October 4.
- **Trustworthy ...** The next quarterly meeting of the FCAHS Board of Trustees is scheduled for Wednesday, October 7 at 3 PM, at the Town building. Members are welcome to attend.
- **Building for Rent ...** The FCAHS building is available for rent. For full-day use, the rate is \$200 for profit-making organizations, \$100 for 501 C (3) non-profit organizations, \$75 for the general public, and \$50 for FCAHS members; the respective rates for half-day use are \$100, \$50, \$37.50, and \$25. There is no fee for FCAHS-sponsored events. A security deposit equal to the user fee, and proof of \$250,000 liability insurance, are required. There are also fees for a custodian (\$15/hour, minimum \$60), and for heat, if required (\$50). Contact the FCAHS President for further information.
- **Claire to Cleveland ...** We wish lifetime member Claire Kepner well as she moves to Ohio for family reasons. Over the years, Claire served two one-year terms as our President, six as Secretary, and one as Treasurer, not to mention helping out immensely at our work-days and special events.
- **Gone and Forgotten ...** One of our members notes that the Fly Creek Village (Presbyterian) Cemetery, across the road from our building, has become an eyesore. It belonged to the Fly Creek Presbyterian Church, built in 1840 and razed in 1937. As an abandoned cemetery, it technically belongs to the Town of Otsego, whose only obligation is to mow it twice a year. Naturally, that is not sufficient to keep it looking presentable or to honor those laid to rest there.
- **Supervision ...** Ted Feury, Town Supervisor since 2024, has resigned, with Pat Kennedy taking over as acting Supervisor. A complete list of Town Supervisors and Clerks appeared in the Fall, 2024 *Fly Creeker*.

NEWS BRIEFS, Continued

- **Missing Meetings ...** The editor has compiled a 96%-complete list of meeting programs throughout the 37-year history of the Society, but is missing a few entries: September and October, 2008; January, 2009; October, 2018; June, 2019; January, 2020; June, July, and October, 2021; April, May, June, and July, 2022; and October and November, 2022. These were not covered by our newsletter nor other sources checked. Does anyone have information on any of these programs?
- **Appraising an Event ...** Our second Antique Appraisal & Museum Day was held on June 28. Kevin Bolton, of One Man's Trash Estate Sales, was the on-site appraiser, donating his services for our benefit (\$362 worth – thanks, Kevin!). There were also displays from area museums, including the Cherry Valley Museum, Fenimore Art Museum, Fenimore Farm & Country Village, Fort Plain Museum, Hanford Mills, Hyde Hall, and Leatherstocking Historic Railroads, as well as the FCAHS museum.
- **Toying with Us ...** An antique toy & train show may be scheduled in the near future. Contact John Phillips for information, and stay tuned!

A PLEA FOR HELP

The Fly Creek Area Historical Society is in crisis.

Years ago, certain members were heard to complain about “STP” – the “same ten people” doing practically everything that was necessary to keep the Society going. That tends to be a recurring theme for groups like this, but usually we’ve had new people to step in as others stepped out. For 37 years, we’ve kept up monthly meeting programs, several special events each year, and a quarterly newsletter, which is more than most historical societies can say – not to mention maintaining a 127-year-old building to support these activities.

But now more than ever before, we are hanging on by threads to maintain these services. Our membership has been cut almost in half over the past 20 years, from 243 in 2006 to 138 today. In just the past 16 months, we have lost two of our most active members to death, and two others to relocation. This adds more and more to the plates of the remaining core of active members, most of whom are in their 70s and 80s. The “STP” is now more like SSP. Some of us are feeling burnt-out, and/or ready to retire. One member of our Board of Trustees has resigned, and others are counting down their days. Our annual Fly Creek Yard Sale Day, a fixture for more than two decades, probably will not happen this year. We are considering dropping the fall Country Breakfast and other special events as well, maybe even refreshments at the meetings.

We very much appreciate your financial support of our Society, and understand that many of you do not live in the area, or have physical or time limitations. However, we need more active members to help keep the FCAHS going. We need more people to attend the business meetings and help with committees. We need new and younger people to join.

Following are some ways that people can assist:

- Helping to set up for monthly meetings, and clean up afterwards.
- Occasionally providing refreshments for the monthly meetings.
- Helping to set up for special events, and clean up afterwards.
- Hanging up posters advertising our monthly meetings and special events.
- Joining some of our committees: Archives, Publications, Programs, Membership, Building & Grounds, Research, Finance, Activities, and Technology.
- Helping to recruit friends and neighbors to join.

Most of these things would require just an hour or two here and there, but would lighten the loads of the rest of us. Please contact President Greg Crowell, Vice-President Bill Deane, or any of the Trustees if you can help.

Thank you,
The FCAHS Board of Trustees

Moving the Model T with Orlo J. Brown

By Wes Ciampo

(Editor's note: following is an edited version of an article Wes wrote for the October 1, 2021 issue of *Old Cars* magazine. It is reprinted with their permission. Wes notes that he has a lot of information on Orlo Brown, who is interred in Fly Creek Valley Cemetery with his wife. Hopefully it will lead to a future FCAHS meeting program!)

Orlo J. Brown became a Ford "Agent" in Cooperstown around 1913 and was still operating in that capacity in late 1916. He was a well-respected person, having served as Sheriff of Otsego County from 1909-11 and again from 1915-17. It appears that he remained connected to the Sheriff's office in some capacity until his untimely passing in 1919. These facts may have aided his sales, especially since it looks like he was not the only Ford Agent in town!

Correspondence indicates Mr. Brown operated under some kind of supervision by the Oneonta Sales Company. Oneonta Sales became a Ford dealership in 1912 and was a well-respected, successful business until the 1970s, when it ceased operations. There are also references to "sub-agents," but it is not clear exactly how the relation between the dealer and the agent was structured.

Orlo's sales must have looked good, based on a May 11, 1914 letter from Riley J. Warren, founder of Oneonta Sales: "We are pleased to note the recent sale of Fords which you have made and trust the good work will go on."

Correspondence to Mr. Brown shows that in addition to being overseen by Oneonta Sales, the Long Island City Branch of Ford Motor Company also was involved with his agency until August 6, 1915, when Mr. Brown received a letter from the that branch informing him that, "... according to a recent re-arrangement of territory announced by our home office, you are now under the jurisdiction of our new Branch at Utica, NY, to whom you should direct all communications with reference to your further business with this Company."

However, Mr. Brown continued to receive instructions and correspondence from Oneonta in addition to numerous letters from the Utica Branch, which had an office at 331 Bleecker Street. The property today is a parking lot, and previously was home to a number of automotive enterprises, including a Pierce-Arrow agency. The only reference that Ford Motor Co. historians have on the Bleecker Street Branch is that it was in operation in 1915 and as late as 1917. Ford closed many branches during World War I and the Utica Branch may not have re-opened.

Ford was a strict parent, keeping a tight rein on its dealer and agent network. Henry L. Dominguez evaluated the situation in his 1981 work, *The Ford Agency – A Pictorial History*: "Ford's method of vehicle and parts distribution was second to none; but the last station in the system – the Ford dealer – was being mercilessly neglected and criticized. Methodically the powerful Ford Branches stripped away the dealer's ability to sell automobiles. The original company policy had been to protect the agency by assigning it a certain amount of sales territory, but gradually it authorized the branches to reduce the dealer's area and even assign additional dealers. The branches would analyze the dealer's districts regularly and reassigned a dealer's territory if it was believed that he was not making adequate sales. If there was an agency not reaching all of its potential customers, then additional dealers were assigned."

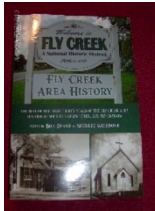
Mr. Brown was not without some issues with the Utica Branch and it seems that Ford Agents in general were often at odds with branch offices. Branch offices also sold Ford automobiles but were company operations, often heavily subsidized by Ford Motor Company. At the same time, they supervised the operations and relations with agents and dealers. In a letter from the Utica Branch Office dated November 5, 1915, Mr. Brown was questioned over the sale of a car with motor # 902608, a Model T Touring Car, to J. Harry Cook, also a Ford Agent in Cooperstown for \$50 over the stated Ford Motor Company price of \$440. Mr. Cook, according to the paperwork, paid \$490, plus the delivery fee of \$21.65. Utica ordered Mr. Brown to refund the difference to Mr. Cook. To further muddy the waters, in a letter dated November 11, 1915 to Mr. Brown from the Utica Branch Office, Oneonta Sales, another Ford Dealer, referred to reports about cars delivered to Mr. Brown and also to a dealer in Worcester. Wright and Carpenter had the motor numbers "erroneously reported." The #902608 mentioned in the November 5 letter was said to be mixed up with motor #909608. Mr. Brown was cautioned not to just pass on paperwork without actually checking the motor number on the vehicle. On the letter, the motor #902683 was written in pencil in two places, leading us to wonder if there was more confusion! None of the other correspondence in the collection refers to this matter anymore. It is interesting to note that that Wright and Carpenter later sold Chevrolets.

The Ford "roadman" was a very important and powerful person in the Ford administrative scheme. He visited dealers and agents and sub-agents regularly to inspect the facilities as well as files. His reports, if too negative too often, could result in the termination of the dealer or agency contract by Ford Motor Company. In a letter to Mr. Brown dated October 2, 1916, from Oneonta Sales Company, R. J. Warren expressed great concern over a letter he received from Ford Motor Company in reference to a visit by one of the Ford roadmen the week prior. Mr. Brown used the Leatherstocking Garage in Cooperstown as the facility to service and repair Ford products. The roadman discovered

Another issue that seems to have been a focus of agents, dealers and Ford Branch Offices was the encroachment on designated territories by others. Mr. Brown was contacted by the Utica Branch Office on November 8, 1916 because another agent, in Ilion, registered a claim saying that Mr. Brown had sold a car with motor # 1403535 to F. W. Greene (later claimed to be an associate of Mr. Brown) who lived in Mr. Brown's territory, who in turn, had "swapped" the car with a man named Williams who lived in South Columbia, the Ilion Agent's territory, perhaps for a team of horses and other considerations. Mr. Mackay of the Utica Branch in no uncertain terms told Mr. Brown that "The Ilion agent has a clear claim for full commission on this sale."

We may never know how and when this issue was finally resolved. In all fairness, Mr. Brown was also the claimant in a number of cases where other agents appeared to have sold cars in his territory. Along with the letters of criticism and complaints, there were also several commending Mr. Brown on his sales. Ford Motor Company kept close track of its sales and service forces but this was the time when Model Ts were selling very well and there was obviously money to be made at all levels. Mr. Brown operated in what was then and still is a very rural area but the demand for transportation was great and the stories are quite intriguing.

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORY



Each issue, we will include an article from our 2022 book, *Fly Creek Area History*. The book is still available at the FCAHS/Grange building (\$20 for members), and at the Fly Creek General Store and Fly Creek Cider Mill (\$25 plus tax for the general public). Copies can also be mailed in the continental U.S. (library rate) for an additional \$7 per book.

175 YEARS OLD, AND STILL GOING STRONG

By Elaine Harvey, Autumn 1997

[Editor's note: the following is a revised version of an article which first appeared in the Summer 1990 *Fly Creeker*. It was prepared by Elaine Harvey from material presented by Ron Bouton and her at the January 24, 1990 FCAHS meeting. Helen Ellwood, Margaret Jensen, Sally Rezen, and Freida Snyder also provided valuable research and information. Most of this version also appeared as an insert to the limited-edition cachet envelope which was sold during and after the 1997 event. On November 2, 2013, the Fly Creek P.O. became a "Regionally-Managed Post Office," under the jurisdiction of the Cooperstown P.O. Thus ended Fly Creek's 191-year run as an independent Post Office.]

A special postal cancellation on July 20, 1997 marked the 175th anniversary of the Fly Creek Post Office. According to the June 17, 1822 edition of Cooperstown's *Freeman's Journal*, "a new post office has been established in the Town of Otsego, about four miles west of Cooperstown, to be called the Fly Creek Post Office." The original office was located at Stephen North's former store building.

North moved from Connecticut to Fly Creek in 1788. He was a merchant, tinsmith, farmer, and father of nine children (not necessarily in that order). His store building still stands behind the house most recently occupied by Bill and Margaret Eldridge on State Highway 28, just east of the four-corners. It was painted white, with red trim. Above the front entrance was a small door through which grain was raised and lowered. A small loft held rags, sheepskins, etc., which were taken in trade for tinware. The building's beams are still lined with nails and pegs which held merchandise.

Mail was first brought to Fly Creek by stagecoach traveling from Albany along the old Cherry Valley Turnpike. Later, it arrived by trolley, and then, the Highway Post Office, a bus service which ran from Utica to Binghamton and back each day. Today, mail arrives daily by truck from Utica.

At first, people picked up all their mail at the Post Office. Rural Free Delivery was introduced in the early 1900s, with Fly Creek's first rural route served by horse & buggy.

According to the late Erastus Bouton, if the snow was too deep on the road, the carrier would go “cross-lots” right to customers’ homes.

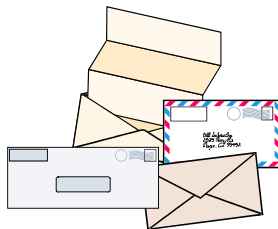
Since 1822, the Fly Creek Post Office has been located in at least ten different places. These, not necessarily in order, are:

1. Stephen North’s store building, as described above.
2. On the site of Gordon Robinson’s home, directly south of the Fly Creek Church.
3. A store owned and operated by Arthur Cheney, later the site of the Up the Creek Antiques.
4. The building which most recently housed the Crossroads Inn and Biaggio’s Restaurant [later Portabello’s].
5. The old Badger house, now a multi-family home, located at the “Y” of Cemetery Road and County Highway 26.
6. A small building once used as Frank Allison’s meat market. Located one building up from the Badger house on Cemetery Road, it now belongs to Ed and Vera Young.
7. Sam Hunter’s store, located at the site of Donald Davis’s present business. The old store was moved in a clandestine operation some years back, and it is now a barn behind Sandy Bowman’s home on County Highway 26.
8. At the site of the current Fly Creek General Store (formerly Aufmuth’s). It was housed on the ground level, when the building was used by an undertaker, and before it was moved back to make room for the paved highway. At another time, the P.O. was on the upper floor of this same building.
9. In the third house north of the store, now an apartment building belonging to Richard Bird.
10. In its present location, the first building north of the Fly Creek General Store.

There were also Post Offices in Fly Creek Valley (1900-04), and in Oaksville at various times between 1814-1932.

Following is a list of Fly Creek Postmasters and their dates of appointment:

William Sprague	6/17/1822	Arthur W. Cheney	6/ 4/1907
Chester Jarvis		Samuel H. Hunter	6/ 1/1915
Ceylon North	2/11/1851	Eugenia D. Barber	8/ 1/1943
Ezra Badger	6/16/1853	Marie Gardner	2/ 9/1944
Silas Alger	5/10/1861	Ronald Bouton	1/30/1973
Dewitt Badger	8/25/1885	Elaine Harvey	1/ 4/1986
Theodore M. Doubleday	4/14/1890	Kathy Bleuer	3/13/1999
Dewitt Badger	5/ 5/1893	Ruthann Perri Johnson	1/ /2001
S. Wilson Cheney	5/20/1897		



MEETINGS & PROGRAMS

The next three FCAHS monthly meetings are scheduled for July 22, August 26, and September 23, 2026. The August and September meetings will start at 6:30 PM at the FCAHS/Grange building at 208 Cemetery Road. Meeting programs are free to FCAHS members; we request a free-will donation from non-members. More details will follow in local newspapers, posters, and our web-site.

In July, we will meet at the Cornfield Hall at 655 County Highway 26, Fly Creek for both the 6:30 program and the regular meeting which follows. Jessie Ravage and Slovenian Farmers' Independent Benevolent Society members will present "Slovenians and the Cornfield Hall: A Century in the Fly Creek Area." The Society was founded by the Slovenians in 1926, thus is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

August is our Annual Meeting, featuring annual elections and reports. It will be preceded by a covered-dish dinner at 5:30 PM. And in September, former WBNG News Chief Videographer Jim Andrews will present "Otsego Stories."

Our three most recent meetings were held on April 22, May 27, and June 24. In April, Dr. Cindy Falk presented "The Changing Rural Landscape." The video presentation featured barns from around New York State over the past two centuries, including some at the Fenimore Farm and elsewhere in Otsego County. Cindy also discussed New York's farming history and trends.

In May, more than 60 people met at the former Fly Creek Trolley Station at 187 Cemetery Road, where Les Sittler gave a terrific history and tour of the building. It was erected in 1903 and faithfully restored by Les after he purchased it in 1989. During the business meeting, the proposed By-Laws revisions, listed in the last newsletter, were unanimously approved.

And in June, Abigail Mosenthin, DrPH, MPH, CIC and Alex Scorzafava from the Otsego County Department of Health presented "Tick-Borne Diseases & prevention: What Every Otsego County Resident Should Know." It was a folksy and informative Power-Point presentation, well-attended, with a long Q&A session.

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The Society mourns the death of **Tim Weir**, who died unexpectedly in Yuma, Arizona on April 11, 2026.

Timothy G. Weir was born in Cooperstown on December 7, 1948, the son of Jo-Ann and Elial Weir, Jr. He grew up in Fly Creek and graduated from Cooperstown High School, before joining the U.S. Marine Corps. Not long after his discharge, Tim joined the U.S Navy, where he served for 29 years before retiring in 2002 as Master Chief Petty Officer. He and his wife of 39 years, Layne Gray Weir, became valued members of the FCAHS in recent years.

Besides Layne, Tim is survived by his mother, brother, sister, two children, grandchildren, and many cousins and friends. His passing leaves a void the in the Fly Creek community.

NO SECOND FIDDLES

The Weir family of the Fly Creek area played a major role in a 1987 book, *Old-Time Music Makers of New York State*, by Simon J. Bronner (Syracuse University Press). Pages 107-118 feature the Weirs, and they are also mentioned in other places throughout the 252-page coffee-table book, which Layne Weir shared with us. Layne's husband, Tim, was the grandson of Elial Glen "Pop" Weir.

Pop Weir, born in Gouverneur, N.Y. in 1890, was the patriarch of a large music-making family, including daughter Violet "Buster," and sons Dorrance "Haunch," Don, Les "Tad," and Elial, Jr. "Hydie." Pop moved to Otsego County in the 1920s and later ran a general store in Oaksville. He kept two or three violins on the wall and held mid-afternoon fiddling sessions there. Instruments played by the family, besides violins, included banjos, guitars, piano, harmonicas, and spoons. The Weir family played at the Oaksville Hotel, house dances (later replaced by barn and Grange dances), and the Farmers' Museum, among other places. In 1990 and 1992, Weir family members entertained the FCAHS with musical programs.

FLY CREEK AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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