

“The Backbone”

B A C K B O N E R I D G E H I S T O R Y G R O U P

The Smith Methodist or Bethel cemetery work project

Three beautiful spring days found a group of volunteers and National Forest employees clearing brush and dead trees from two abandoned cemeteries, one located in the Town of Lodi and the other located in the town of Covert. Both cemeteries were concealed with heavy brush and downed trees. On Crisfield Road in Lodi, four stones had previously been recorded; twelve more stones were discovered by projects end.

In both cemeteries, over many decades, several of the stones had fallen over due to a long period of neglect. The fallen stones with the names, birth dates, date of death and touching inscriptions were buried under six to eight inches of soil and a thick blanket of periwinkle.

As the clean-up proceeded someone would call out enthusiastically,

“I found Peter”, or “Here is Ellen”. The stones were cleaned, washed, the inscriptions noted and then where feasible, they were repaired and reset.



Among the descendants of families buried in the Covert Methodist Smith Plot on hand to help with the cleanup were Georgianna and Jim Stevenson of Trumansburg and Rick and Carol Skinner of Waterloo.

National Forest Archaeologist Dave Lacy led the project, replicating a very popular program in the Green Mountain and White Mountain National Forests in Vermont and New Hampshire. Dave commented that gravestone restoration work isn't difficult, but does require some common sense respecting the age and condition of the stones. He encouraged a continuation of the preservation activities of the many old abandoned cemeteries in and around the Finger Lakes National Forest and plans to be back again for another cleanup session October 28, 2009.

More photos on page 4!



Save The DATE! October 28-29th!

The Backbone Ridge History Group will once again meet at the Smith Methodist/Bethel Cemetery in Covert along CR 143 to do more restoration work. We need your help! Please join us to help cut brush, locate headstones and clean-up. Many of the inhabitants of the Hector Backbone are buried to rest here; let them not be forgotten. Contact Kari Milliman Lusk, 607-546-4470 for more information!

P I C T U R E S f r o m c e m e t e r y c l e a n - u p

The Smith Methodist or Bethel Cemetery in Covert, NY



"BEFORE" - What a mess!



"AFTER" - Gerry Messmer, Carol Skinner and Dick Skinner, and Rita Hajd take a break to admire their work.



Below: Dave Lacy and Volunteer



What a difference a handful of folks and a couple of days make!



D i g i t a l r e c o r d e r s
a v a i l a b l e f o r o r a l
h i s t o r y c o l l e c t i o n

"If you are interested in helping out with collecting oral history, please call us!"

The Finger Lakes National Forest purchased two digital recorders which can be used to collect oral history.

By utilizing digital sound, the files can be immediately accessi-

ble on-line. Using past technology, recordings were only available after many hours were spent transcribing the data, which potentially takes up to 10 hours per one hour recording session. If you are interested in

collecting oral history for the group, please call Kari Lusk, 546-4470. We are happy to loan you the equipment and welcome you to join our research efforts. We also have lists of potential candidates.

History event In Hector

The BRHG conducted an event at the Hector Fire Hall on April 29, 2009.

Walter Gable, Seneca County Historian, showcased his feature story on the Hector Backbone, and the FLNF had a display on the history of the forest.

Dave Lacy, Forest Archaeologist for the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes NF, gave a presentation on the importance of cultural heritage. Christine Richards, Project Archivist, gave an update on the grant funded project, and talked about collecting oral histories. She conducted a live oral history at the meeting .



BRHG going not for profit?

The BRHG is looking into obtaining not for profit status and is seeking volunteers to help achieve this goal.

“Once we have this status, we will be able to apply for grants, which will further our research efforts “ said Allan Buddle.

If you are interested in being part of this endeavor, please contact Allan at 607-532-4213.

BRHG Event at Logan Community Center

The BRHG wound up Summer 2009 with a very interesting and informative “Historical Happenings” session Saturday afternoon September 12 at the prestigious and historic “old Logan Church.” Thirty-one people enjoyed presentations taking us all the way back to the American Civil War. The audience and members of the BRHG were also treated by having some very special guests. We were pleased to have in the audience one of the Finger Lakes foremost Historians, whose new book will be forthcoming in time for Christmas 2009, Ms Barbara Bell. Seated next to Barb was Ms Georgianna Stevenson of the Ulysses Historical Society, and Ms Julie Clawson of the Lodi Historical Society, both of whom are well known for their historical preservation work in our communities.

Following the administrative and public information announcements by BRHG Chairman Allan Buddle and Kari Lusk of the United States Forest Service, the program was kicked off with the story of the Red House, presented by Ms Denny Teeter who ably filled in for Joan Martin who was unable to attend Saturday’s program.

The Red House has the distinction of being the only homestead continuously privately owned and to this day totally surrounded by the lands of the National Forest.

The second presentation held the audience in suspense regarding the plane crash near Potomac Road in the National Forest until Dave Beckhorn and Denny Teeter unfolded the story that happened over 60 years ago. Dave's father, Waldo Beckhorn, was a movie camera hobbist back in those years and captured the scene on his 8 mm home movie camera. The audience, enthralled by Dave's film, was simultaneously entertained by first hand accounts of how the Voorheis men found the wreckage and the story that ensued. These accounts were from the memoirs and memorabilia of the Ida Voorheis White collection as presented by Denny since Ida could not be personally present. The film continued following the plane crash episode as Dave narrated the film's other showings of farm operations of those years and also included some nostalgic scenes of parades, including the Watkins Salt Band of yesteryear. Some of the concluding film showed the clearing of land for grape farming by dynamiting trees that stood in the way. However, the piece-de-resistance was the all too short film clip of the terrible train wreck near the Beckhorn home. Freight cars, tank and other cars strewn about as if perpetrated by some mad demon.

Following a short coffee and goodie break the audience moved to the main sanctuary area and were introduced to Bruce Adams. Bruce ably described how the Adams family moved a complete home from up on the Backbone, downhill along the Ball Diamond Road to its present day location on the Seneca Lake shore, a feat almost unheard of in those days.

The final presentation of the day excitingly whet our appetites with the memorabilia on display and used by Dave Smith where he captivated us with his Civil War story that began in Interlaken on the East side of the Backbone. Dave's story, "An Interlaken Boy Marches Off To War," related how one of his young ancestors enlisted rather innocently in the Union Army as a band member but who eventually really saw what war was all about. Through captivity, imprisonment, parole and then the terrible fighting at Gettysburg during Pickett's infamous charge and on until Lee surrendered this young lad of the Fighting 126th proudly did his part in the War of Rebellion.

It was the perfect day for "Historic Happenings." It was a gray, drizzly day among the beautiful old maples surrounding one of the Backbone's most nostalgic places and was completely satisfying as we bid good-bye to one another and to the "old Logan Church" -a special place still there today and inspiring us all to keep the History of the Backbone alive and well because that is who we are and from whence we came.

Backbone Ridge Trivia

The photo on the right was taken in the 1940's and shows men unloading cattle. Notice the electric fence insulators on the right. How were they powered?

Does anyone know how Chicken Coop Road got its name?

Please email me at klusk@fs.fed.us or drop a postcard in the mail to FLNF, 5218 SR 414, Hector, NY 14841.



BECOME A VOLUNTEER!



Julia Clawson, Lodi Historical Society and Lodi Town Historian, (607) 582-6484

Walt Gable, Seneca County Historian, (315) 539-1785, wgable@co.seneca.ny.us

The Backbone Ridge History Group is a grass roots organization that formed to collect the history of the land and people between Seneca and Cayuga Lakes, in and around the area that is now known as the Finger Lakes National Forest (FLNF).

If you'd like to share stories, information, or pictures, please contact us!

Kari Lusk, Finger Lakes National Forest (607) 546-4470 or klusk@fs.fed.us

Allan Buddle, Interlaken Historical Society (607) 532-4213 or orchardland@zoom-dsl.com

Andrew Tompkins, Schuyler County Historical Society, (607) 535-9741 or info@schuylerhistory.org

Photos from the Crisfield cemetery restoration project



“Before” view of what the cemetery looked like.



Photo above: Gayle Hatch, Rita Haid, Rebecca Wright and Dave Lacy work on the Crisfield Road abandoned cemetery.

