The Backbone

a publication of the Backbone Ridge History Group of Schuyler and Seneca Counties

BECAUSE HISTORY MATTERS

Our first year as a Not-for-Profit!

Show your support by becoming a Charter Member!

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Welcome!

Welcome to this issue of *The Backbone* as we wobble around like a new born calf getting on its feet. The Backbone Ridge History Group is beginning its first year as a Not-For-Profit, setting up a membership organization which we hope you will support by becoming a **Charter Member.** Your financial support will allow the BRHG to continue mailing newsletters, renting space for programs and paying the fee for a website domain. The website is already under construction thanks to the expertise of Bob Crippen, one of our talented and energetic trustees.

Support also comes in the form of stories, photos, family histories, anything that provides information about the families, farms and businesses formerly on the Backbone Ridge or in the surrounding settlements. Historical items continue to "come out of the woodwork", as they say. When he read the September, 2010 issue of the *Backbone*, Bill Taylor in Florida, inquired about the Milliman Family and the result of that exchange was several photos of the Logan area, which are displayed elsewhere in this issue. I hope that it will trigger some memories of old photos or documents that may be tucked away in your attic. We can scan and (cont' on page 2)

Website Launch

Last December we secured our website domain names: www.backboneridgehistorygroup.com and www.backboneridgehistorygroup.org.

You can use either address to reach the website[1].

The goal of the website is to provide members and all other interested parties an up-to-date information platform for past and future projects, programs and progress of the Backbone

(continued on page 2)

Welcome (continued from page 1)

return any items that you are willing to share. In addition, we strongly encourage you to write about your history or share what others have written. Others will read your stories and maybe they will be moved to put their own memories on paper too. This is how we will continue to build the record of this historically unique area, the Backbone Ridge.

Thank you so much for your support. Please see the enclosed letter from Rose Smith, Chairman of the Membership Committee. Also, please join me in thanking Kari Milliman for putting this newsletter together all the way out in Texas.

Submitted by Allan Buddle

Share your history!

Website Launch (continued from pg 1)

Ridge History group, also to provide information and/or links to our partner organizations in the surrounding area.

We have already made our soft launch, which means you can access the website today; the framework is there, and though still in its infant stage (e.g. most of the links are still in the "UNDER CONSTRUCTION" status), we're on our way. We will be working on one link (page) at a time ensuring its functionality before moving on to the next link. The "Home" page will be your starting place and eventually display current information on programs and projects.

As time goes on, we will be posting photos on the site and hope that you too can provide us copies of your photos relating to the Backbone Ridge.

Some other links we're working on are: a "Calendar" link where we can post our upcoming events and those of partner organizations, a "Cemeteries" link that will guide you to a list of all cemeteries in the Backbone Ridge area and the specific cemetery with a list of internments, a "Constitution" link that will display our constitution and by-laws, a "Membership" link where you will be able to join our organization online, a "Newsletter" link where you can view previous published newsletters[2] and a "Programs" link that will list the date and location of future programs. We hope you have a chance to check it out and we welcome your comments and ideas on improving our website.

Notes:
1 (*The reason both domains were reserved was to avoid any other party from using the names in the future*).

2 (*current Newsletter only available to active members*).

Submitted by Bob Crippen

Backbone Ridge Research Report

The search continues for information about the homesteads on the Backbone Ridge prior to acquisition by the New Deal Resettlement Administration. A Doctoral Thesis by Lawrence M. Vaughn was published in 1929 containing data gathered between 1926 and 1928 on nine hilltop areas in southern New York. On page 21, the author states that "all areas of 5,000 acres or more in which at least fifty percent of the farms are vacant have been outlined. There are many more areas within this territory which are similar, except they are smaller." The "territory" from which the nine hilltop areas were selected includes Steuben, Schuyler, Tompkins, Chemung, Tioga, Broome, Cortland, Chenango and southern Cayuga and Madison Counties.

Although a hilltop area containing abandoned farms, the Backbone Ridge was not included in the nine selected for study. This may have been for one of two reasons-there were fewer than fifty percent of the farms abandoned or the area was less than 5,000 acres in size. It is unclear in the thesis why fifty percent abandoned and 5,000 acres were selected as limiting factors. However, two of the areas that were selected- Connecticut Hill and Sugar Hill lie on either side of the Backbone Ridge and are reasonably close to allow some comparisons. Data reflecting those areas are presented on the next page.

At the beginning of the 345 page Thesis the author states why farms have been abandoned, i.e. natural characteristics of the soil, changed economic conditions, adaptability of modern (1920's) field equipment, lack of drainage and commercial fertilizer and remoteness of markets. I believe the huge volume of data gathered does little to support or argue against the opinions stated by the author. They are very interesting, however, and probably represent the thinking of the day at least in some circles. Unfortunately there is insufficient space in this newsletter to include those opinions. If anyone reading this report would like a copy of these pages, please contact us. We can mail or e-mail a copy. We also would very much like to hear from you regarding information or opinions that you may have concerning the operating and abandoned farms on the Backbone Ridge in the 1920s or earlier.

The data do provide a pretty good picture of life on the Connecticut Hill and Sugar Hill farms that were NOT abandoned. It will be important to keep the data in mind as we interpret life on the Backbone Ridge.

Data provided on next page.

Submitted by Allan Buddle

1 Thesis, *Abandoned Farm Areas in Southern New York State*, Lawrence M. Vaughn, 1928, Cornell University

Photographs from Logan Community

A special thanks goes to Bill Taylor for providing these pictures of Logan.

Selected Data from southern NYS farms 1926 to 1928

Factor	Connecticut Hill	Sugar Hill
No. of Acres	10,314	5,008
No. of people living in area	114	56
% of occupied farms w/no children	55	70
No. of children living at home		
Under age 10	24	5
Age 10-14	16	3
Age 15-19	9	4
Age 20 +	6	2
% of occupants who previously farmed	67	67
% of occupants with >5 yrs residence	32	15
No. of occupied farms	31	20
No. of vacant farms	76	25
% of total acreage in hay	7.7	11.3
% of total acreage in other crops	5.6	9.2
% of total acreage in pasture	7.1	23.0
% of total acreage in idle land	45.2	36.1
% of total acreage in woods	31.6	16.7
% of total acreage in farmstead	2.8	3.7
% of cropland in potatoes	3.6	3.8
% of cropland In buckwheat	19.5	16.8
% of cropland in oats	11.7	4.8
% of cropland n hay	57.9	55.1
Average number of animals per farm		
Cows	1.8	2.4
Heifers	0.5	0.5
Calves	0.1	0.5
Workhorses	2.1	2.2
Ewes	2.3	15.4
Lambs	0.2	13.2
Goats	0	0.3
Brood sows	0.3	0.2
Pigs	1.1	0.9
Hens	41.3	43.5
Turkeys	0.4	0.6
Geese	0.1	0.3

Curry Cemetery clean-up

During a lovely golden fall Columbus Day, with sunlight dappling the landscape and glinting off Curry Creek meandering below, several dedicated volunteers manned shovels, rakes, and other tools as they good naturedly set about cleaning the Curry Cemetery.

This small cemetery is located on the southern edge of the David Beckhorn Farm, in Valois, New York. Known as the Curry Family Cemetery, it consists of many large tombstones with footstones that are labeled and several smaller stones with no labels. There are two Revolutionary War Veterans buried there, which were noted with United States Flags following the cleanup.

During the day of camaraderie, the Forest Supervisor of the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest stopped by to visit and made note of the cooperation between the Forest and the BRHG. Dave Lacy, Forest Archaeologist, led the volunteers in finding graves, repairing tombstones, general cleanup, and the use of a special shaving cream technique to clarify the writing on the stones. Dr. Lacy continues to support and provide enthusiasm to all volunteers, which enables them to do their best. Allan and Ann Buddle spent the day shoveling stone, digging, cleaning headstones and keeping everyone happy while they worked. Bobbi and Dave Beckhorn hosted everyone to goodies at coffee break and lunch, while Brent Dugolinsky spent the morning raking and generally cleaning up around the site. Jerry Messmer arrived later in the day to place flags on the Veterans plots. Ann manned the shaving cream containers and as chief registrar noted specific locations and names of all the headstones. This important document will be housed with the BRHG records for anyone who might wish to do research on local families and genealogy.

The Beckhorns plan to continue to do routine upkeep and maintenance by planting shade grass and keeping the bank stable to prevent erosion. They would be happy to host anyone interested in visiting the cemetery. Visitors are always welcome! If anyone has additional information on families buried in the cemetery, such as family histories, Dave and Bobbi would be happy to receive such information and would continue to update the records.

The BRHG will continue to work on cemeteries on and around the forest, and would appreciate any new and experienced volunteer assistance. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Allan Buddle at 607-532-4213 or orchardland@zoomdsl.com.

Submitted by Bobbi Beckhorn

Dave Beckhorn, Ann Buddle, and Dave Lacy, working at the Curry Family Cemetery.

Hector grazing news

Can you help?

The Backbone Ridge History Group (BRHG) is trying to get more information about the early days of the Hector Cattle Grazing Association (HCGA). They are looking for information, stories, articles and photographs.

Here are some questions they have:
What years did you work for HCGA?
What were your job duties?
Who were your co-workers at the time?
What were the duties of the others?
Do you have any special stories or memories to share?
Were you involved in Christmas tree or timber sales?
Do you remember any special events related to HCGA?
What are your memories of any of the HCGA houses?
Do you have any photographs relating to HCGA? Events etc.
Do you know anyone we should talk to, who would have some information?
Can you identify any of our pictures we have?

If you have any information, stories or photographs related to Hector Cooperative Grazing Assoc. please contact Charlie by phone 607 387-9822 or by e-mail at towerguycb@gmail.com. We want to preserve your history for years to come. You could also visit the Finger Lakes National Forest (FLNF) web site- Heritage Resources to learn more about the FLNF and HCGA and the BRHG.

Submitted by Charlie Baldwin, Hector Grazing Assoc. Manager

A note from the ranger

A note from the Finger Lakes National Forest:

The Finger Lakes National Forest would like to thank the Backbone Ridge History Group (BRHG) of Schuyler and Seneca Counties for being a key partner in the preservation and interpretation of the historic and cultural aspects of the Forest. We would especially like to thank the members and volunteers of the BRHG for their continued interest and support of the Forest and we are pleased to have finalized our agreement back in October 6, 2010. The continued support of heritage, historical programs, education, research, and interpretation to this Forest are greatly appreciated by the US Forest Service and we look forward to 2011 with confidence that we will continue to do great work! - Jodie L. Vanselow, District Ranger

Return to the Bethel Chapel of Covert

On the second day of October, once again could be heard a voice ringing out among the trees, "I found one". Five members of the Smith Family returned to the Smith Methodist Episcopal Cemetery on Military Lot 95 in the Town of Covert to continue with the restoration project begun last year. Four stones previously unrecorded and obviously buried for a long, long time were unearthed, cleaned up, and placed on beds of crush stone. You could almost feel a sense of relief as these stones were raised above the ground and the sun shone on them through the tree branches.

Those souls whose stones were found were Hannah, wife of Ebenezer Ellis, died December, 1840, Ebenezer Ellis, died August 10, 1866, age 92 years, 3 months, 16 days, Sidney G, son of Runyun and Ellen Giles, died July 14, 1851, age 1 year, __ months, __ days, and Sarah, wife of Samuel Dimon, died June 26, 1835, age 69 years.

Methodism had its inception in the Town of Covert on June 28, 1828 in Kingtown with Obadiah Smith as leader. A church and society was organized and in existence for more than 60 years on Lot 95 in the Town of Covert where the cemetery restoration project is taking place. Next to the cemetery you can clearly see the stone foundation for the meeting house. In 1876 the church reported a membership of eighty with an average attendance of one hundred persons and a salary of $200 a year for the pastor. With the church community gradually becoming absorbed into other churches, services were suspended and on June 26, 1899, the building and horse sheds were sold at auction to Thomas Donahue of Trumansburg.

Above Lynn Stevenson Fisher is preparing a map of the grave stone markers in the cemetery. Lynn is a descendent of the Smith Family who settled on Military Lot 95 at Liberty Corners.

Early History, &c., Town of Covert, Seneca Co., N.Y., W. E. Morrison & Co., 1983, pgs. 38 and 157.

Submitted by Allan Buddle

Backbone Ridge History Group
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- Julia Clawson, Vice President
- Walter Gable, Secretary
- David Smith, Treasurer

Newsletter Designer/Editor
- Kari Milliman

Certificates were prepared for Charter Members of the BRHG. A sample is provided below.

CHARTER MEMBER
OF THE
BACKBONE RIDGE HISTORY GROUP
OF
SCHUYLER AND SENECA COUNTIES

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO

Kari Milliman

IN RECOGNITION OF VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO

The Backbone Ridge History Group of Seneca and Schuyler Counties

ALLAN BUDDLE 2/14/11

A special thanks goes to Bill Taylor for providing these pictures.

Hector Falls, right, and Logan, below.