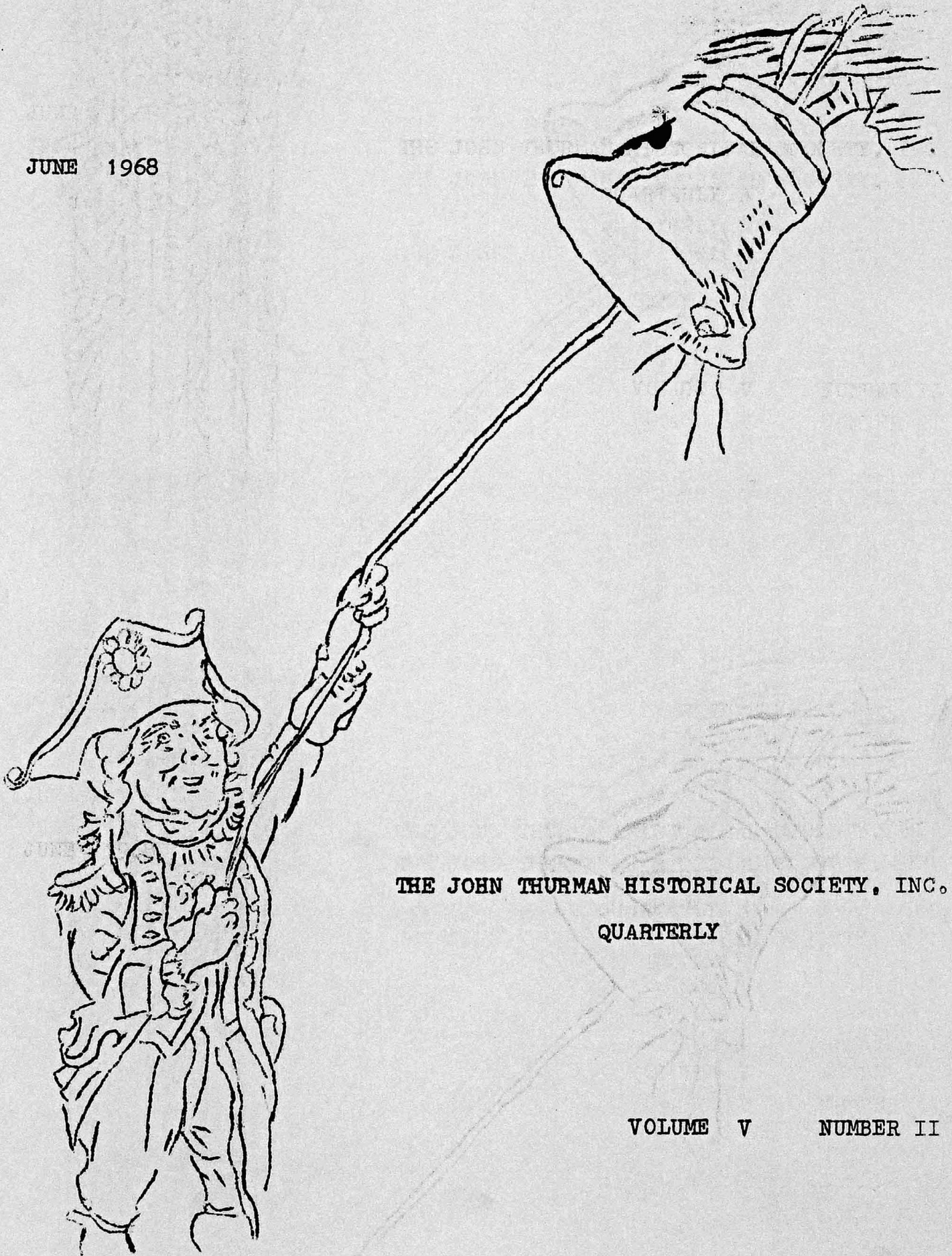


1968

JUNE 1968



THE JOHN THURMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

QUARTERLY

VOLUME V

NUMBER II

LOGGING OPERATIONS FIFTY YEARS AGO

by  
Mrs. Alice P. Bennett  
(Cont'd from last Quarterly)

The camp consisted of the kitchen, one side flanked by a long oilcloth covered table with benches for chairs. The other side had three large stoves. There was just room to walk between the table and stoves when the men were seated. There was a store room too. The kitchen helpers' two bedrooms opened from the kitchen.. Above were the sleeping quarters of the men; beds were of cheap mattresses and springs. If one wanted a "bed-stead" he had to build it, which many men did.

The duties of the choreboy were to make these beds, keep the men's room swept, peel potatoes, and do other kitchen chores as needed. In addition he was supposed to keep the barn clean, too. On my first year in camp we did the men's washing, using a pounding barrel and scrub board. My husband who was chore boy at that time pounded the clothes and I finished up with the board. The skin on my knuckles was always rubbed off.

The only recreation the men had was playing cards, fishing and hunting. There was little reading and what few books and papers found their way into camp were eagerly read until they were worn out.

Men coming in looking for work usually brought the mail.. Otherwise, the "tote teams" brought it when they came. These freight rigs brought in the provisions over a tote road. There had to be plenty of food for both man and beast since horses furnished the only power and needed to be well fed.

A few of the men found it difficult to stay in camp after they had a month's pay in their pocket. They left for the big town and usually came back broke to "whale up another stake" as they put it. Sometimes they came back with a hang over. I remember one man who had delirium tremens. The men had to be routed out in the middle of the night to find him before he was lost. The forests were first growth spruce and a man in his condition could easily perish from cold and hunger. After keeping him around camp for two or three days under the care of another man, it was decided to send him out to sober up.

Another man coming back to camp from a drinking spree fell in the river as he was crossing a foot bridge. He knew he was wet and cold, had lost his bottle in the river and had nothing to warm him. He woke my husband and asked to buy some dry clothes after which he proceeded to take off his wet ones and put them back on again leaving the dry ones on the bench.

As it neared Christmas, one of the men had been hoarding some bottles in his trunk, locked up safely, as he supposed. When he went to get them, he found someone had broken the hinges and all the bottles were empty. What a scrap when he found out who took the "Christmas cheer"!

Everyone was out and at work at the break of day. Twelve hours was considered a day's work and in emergencies there was no limit. I remember one winter when snow was scarce and spring came early. Meals were served from 1'A. M. almost around the clock during log drawing in order that full advantage could be taken of the frozen ground. Snow and water boxes worked all night drawing snow on the roads and sprinkling it with water. By afternoon these were worn bare again.

(Concluded on page 6)

In the present days of hustle and bustle, including the Gemini flights and the race to the moon, we sometimes forget Industry in the Old Days.

To mention just one we will consider Industry in the HOME, and the part taken by women.

When our mothers and grandmothers prepared wool that had been sheared from their sheep in early summer, it had to be taken to the Carding Mill. Later this would be knit into socks and mittens and sometimes sweaters for the entire family.

First: The wool was washed, spread on lawns, nearby fences, or any convenient place to dry. This took several days. One could drive past many homes in the country at this time of year and see this familiar sight. This was Horse and Buggy Days of course. Occasionally you would hear some nice old lady say to her neighbor, "Maggie has her wool washed."

After the wool was dry it was picked or carded by hand. Then it was put in bags and taken to the Carding Mill to be made into what was known as 'rolls' and later spun into yarn.

The spinning was done on an old fashioned spinning wheel.

I can remember when I was a little girl seeing my mother and grandmother walking back and forth, back and forth across the living room floor spinning these rolls into yarn. How that old wheel purred! At that time I did not realize that some day I might be faced with the same problem. Providing warm socks and mittens for my own family. But grow up I did, and time came for me to learn to spin yarn and knit those socks and mittens.

Now I had to find a spinning wheel. I looked around considerably before I found one at the home of the late Cora Wood, which belonged to her mother, Mrs. Gilbert Wood. The older Mrs. Wood had passed away several years before and her daughter had no use for the extra spinning wheel. She was kind enough to sell me the one her mother owned.

Now it was up to me to learn to use that wheel, which I did, after several tries. I was always breaking the roll here and there until I mastered the art of spinning. The next step was to learn to use that yarn for socks and mittens.

The yarn was rolled off the spindle on to what was known as a reel. It was then wound off by hand into skeins or balls ready for the knitter. Most of the sheep were white and if a different color was desired, this could be done at home by using the inside bark of the Butternut tree. The bark was put in a large kettle; covered with water and boiled until all or most of the color was boiled out of the bark. This produced a beautiful shade of brown. This color was well known to all knitters in the old days.

Having learned the art of spinning and knitting from my own mother, Mrs. Henrietta Cameron, better known as "Ettie", it was no problem to get started on my new job. I have enjoyed spinning and knitting since that time.

No doubt some of you have heard the story about an old lady who sat in her old rocking chair humming and knitting when her home caught fire. She was told she would have to get out of the house to which she replied, "Wait until I knit into the middle of my needle." Many happy memories are connected with the reminiscences of bygone days.

For a number of years I have been interested in finding out "who built what", that is, who built and operated the livery stables, blacksmith shops, tanneries, stores, and other businesses in our area in its early days.

When I was asked to give this talk, I said to Mary, "What subject shall I choose?" She thought it over and said, "How about tanneries? I believe everyone would be interested in those." So I have tried to ascertain what facts I could and correlate them.

Here is an old photograph of the tannery in Warrensburg. It operated under two names: Warren Tannery and Burhans Tannery. We know it as Burhans. We know the photograph was taken between 1879 and 1885, because it shows the first building of the Warrensburg Shirt Company which was erected in 1879-- and the tannery ceased operating in 1885. You will note that two photos were taken, each showing half the scene, then mounted side by side. There were no wide-angle lenses then.

Colonel Burhans was born near Rensselaersville in 1796. He was employed with various leather firms until 1826, and became a partner in the last one, before moving here. Charles Burhans told me that the name was originally Burhaus. Someone wrote it with the "u" upside down, and the family adopted that spelling.

His first home was on the site of the present Warren Inn. His son, Frederick, came with him and lived where the Claude Swan house is now. Later Colonel Gray built the house we now call "The Pillars". For many years it was called "The Elms". Between 1840 and 1865, Col. Burhans purchased The Elms and was living there in 1865 when the stone mansion was started. Col. Gray was a partner with Col. Burhans in a store which stood where Johnny Beffron's store was, near the Warren Inn. They were in the tannery together at that time.

Here is a photograph of the stone mansion which Col. Burhans constructed for his son Frederick. My grandfather built it. He had just finished building the Episcopal Church. The stone for both buildings was taken from Hackensack Mountain. They closed the tannery for the summer, and a good many of the employees worked on the construction of this house. Business was slow at the tanneries in summer anyhow, when the river was running low.

The stone building which is now the Catholic rectory was built by Burhans and used as a special bank for all the Burhans enterprises. A wooden section at the rear housed the watchman. There was a special double partition and double-thickness door between.

The tannery chimney which shows in the mansion photo was torn down some time around 1930--I'm not sure just what year.

During the early part of the 1800's large quantities of hemlock lumber attracted tanneries. Every town had one or two. Kitchell Bishop built one in 1810, but I can find no record of it in histories of the area except some mention of possible remains on the Schroon River above the present dam.

In 1831 the first sole leather tannery in Warren County was built. Some tanneries dealt with other types of leather. In 1832 they first put the hides in the water. We had no cattle industry in this country at that time. The West was not settled much, and hides were imported from South America, Mexico, and what is now California. The hides came to New York by ship, up the canal to Glens Falls, and were teamed up from there.

The original owners not succeeding in business, it was taken over by

Quackenbush and Gray. Col. Burhans purchased Quackenbush's interest. April 1, 1864, Fred Burhans changed the name to E. P. Burhans & Son. The business was carried on by the Burhans heirs until 1885. An Account Book, neatly kept in great detail in beautiful handwriting, says the last hides were put in the water August 1, 1865. It had a capacity of over 3000 hides per year and employed 30 people.

In the picture you can see tenant houses up and down Elm Street and Burhans Avenue. Chauncey Orton was the last resident. The barns were in the back, and piles of bark.

Dismantling of the tannery was started in 1886 by the predecessors of Niagara Mohawk.

According to information of Henry Griffin, who had access to all the records, Burhans built a tannery in Horicon in 1848. It was of stone, 400 feet long, 20 feet high, and had a capacity of 30,000 hides per year. According to historian Smith it was in the possession of A.C. Emerson Co. in 1884.

Both Horicon and Warrensburg tanneries closed for lack of bark. They used to burn the peeled timber. Once when my father was hunting in the woods somewhere in Thurman he came upon a bark pile still in good condition, it had been piled so carefully with the outside to the weather.

Submitted by Beryl Venton

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THANKS !!!

To all who have contributed articles for this Quarterly, a hearty thank you for your interesting material! I find this reading enjoyable. DO YOU? How about some comments? We would like to hear from YOU! Please

Please address all articles and comments to Miss Mabel Tucker, 88 River Street, Warrensburg, N.Y., Publications Chairman.

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IMPORTANT!!!

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER

IMPORTANT!!!.

Notices of meetings will be printed in every Quarterly.

Notices of meetings will be in Warrensburg and Glens Falls papers.

The only notices of meetings to be mailed will be for the purpose of calling special meetings.

Paid-for Quarterlies are laid aside for you and can be picked up at your convenience.

Corresponding Members' copies will be mailed .

The program for 1968-1969 will be printed in each Quarterly.

The next meeting of JTHS, Inc. is scheduled for September 13, 1968, at the Thurman Town Hall, Athol. Watch the newspapers.

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## John Thurman Historical Society, Inc.

June 9, 1967--The slate of officers chosen by the nominating committee and unanimously elected at the annual meeting in May, 1967, follows: President-Myra Magee; V. Pres.-Gladys Murphy; Rec. Sec'y-Beatrice Cameron; Treas.-Hollis Combs; Directors-Hollis Combs-3 years; Alice Parker-2 years; James Magee-1 year. These officers assumed their respective functions at the first regular meeting. The chairman of the Incorporation Committee reported that the final steps had been taken; as of May 25, 1967, we became THE JOHN THURMAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. We began the year 1967-68, under the new status, with a membership of about 70 persons, representing, besides our own town of Thurman, the following areas: Warrensburg, Chestertown, Glens Falls, Hudson Falls, Fort Edward, Albany, Corinth, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Minerva, Newcomb, Keene, Friends Lake, and Long Island. We began 1967-68 with a checking account of \$139.95 and a savings account of \$100. Speaker at this meeting was Warder H. Cadbury, our Albany member from the State University of New York's Philosophy Department. Mr. Cadbury discussed one of his favorite topics of research, the Indian Sabael. More than two dozen of our members made the annual field trip. This year we chose the Shelburne Museum, Burlington, Vermont.

Sept. 8, 1967--A baked ham supper was the feature of this meeting, put on for us by the ladies of Christ Community Church, Athol, benefit of their church building fund; it proved an outstanding success. Guest speaker at this time was Mr. H. J. Swinney, Director of the Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake. Mr. Swinney's topic, "History and Style in Houses" was made especially interesting and vital by the colored slides he used to illustrate the subject. He also made a few remarks on the importance of incorporation. Attorney John S. Hall was also at the speaker's table and took this opportunity to explain some points of difference that we will meet as a corporate body. The attendance record always kept at all meetings showed 47 persons present.

Nov. 10, 1967--67 persons attended this meeting at the Town Hall, Athol. As most of the important business arising at this time of year had been transacted at an executive meeting in October, we were able to thoroughly enjoy the program offered us. Mr. and Mrs. Larry Older of Middle Grove, N.Y., presented a musical treat, -mostly lumberjack and river drive ballads by Mr. Older, who is called "The Last of the Adirondack Minstrels". Mr. Older accompanied himself on the guitar, and prefaced each old-time song with a bit of historical background and explanation. He also played several lively and familiar fiddle tunes. Mrs. Older joined in a duet or two. Audience participation was invited and several requests were granted.

January 12, 1968--This meeting was held at the Albert Emerson Memorial Hall in Warrensburg. A severe spell of sub-zero weather curtailed both attendance and business. The first of the attractive new membership certificates were given out to those present. Corresponding members will receive theirs by mail. Certificates left uncalled for will be available at the Magee home, High Street; they will also be brought to future meetings. The treasurer's report showed that we are beginning 1968 with a checking account balance of \$175.15. The enjoyable part of the evening was a showing of colored slides of a recent trip thru southern Scotland and Ireland by James Magee. At an executive meeting, Feb. 23, 1968 the question of the purchase of a steel filing cabinet and other archival supplies was discussed. A card party to help defray the cost was proposed. Both proposals were accepted. A two-year term for officers was discussed but no action taken at present.

March 8, 1968--We met again at the Memorial Town Hall, Warrensburg. Besides the regular business, we were informed that a four-drawer file

(Logging....Cont'd from page 1.)

With all the hard work, the endless days and the lack of modern improvements, life had its little comedies, even in lumber camps. As we reminisce of these early experiences, many memories will be stored away in our Album of Life which time will never erase.

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(Annual Report Cont'd from page 5.)

and other supplies were ready for the archives committee at the Thurman Town Hall, Athol. A goodly number were in attendance this evening to see slides and hear an interesting discourse on "The Adirondacks, Past and Present." as presented by Mr. Francis Bayle of Glens Falls. Annual Meeting, May 10, 1968-- The officer and director slate presented by the chairman of the nominating committee was elected unanimously, each for a two-year period. The benefit card party chaired by Bernice Maxam, was scheduled for Monday evening, June 3rd; the annual field trip, a boat trip on Lake George, Saturday, June 8th. Marjorie Combs is chairman of this affair. Mr. Stewart Farrar, member from Warrensburg, reminisced about early tanneries of the area. His talk will be found in another section of this issue, and is contributed by Mrs. Beryl Venton. James Magee, by popular request, repeated the slides shown at the January meeting. Many were prevented from attending this showing at that time by unusually cold weather.

This has been an enjoyable experience for me, your president, my very first experience, in fact, in such a role. Without the understanding and the willing cooperation of everyone, it might have been much less enjoyable. Thanks to everyone.

I don't want to close this year's report without mentioning the kindness shown JTHS, Inc., by our good neighbor, Attorney John S. Hall. His patience in straightening out the kinks that we found in such an imposing project as the incorporation of our historical society, his contribution of all legal services, and the interest he has shown this past year, are very deserving of our sincere thanks. (The only incidental expense to JTHS, Inc. was for the minutes book, "Corporate Records", the Seal, and the certificates of membership.)

--Your president,  
Myra Magee

### 1968-1969 DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

#### Directors

- 3 years - Bernice Maxam, W'burg  
James Magee, Athol
- 2 years - Hollis Combs, Thurman
- 1 year - Beatrice Cameron, Athol  
Alice Parker, Thurman

#### Officers

- President - Myra Magee, Athol
- Vice President - Armine Gurney, W'byrg
- Rec. Sec'y - Armine Gurney
- Ass. Sec'y - Faustime Bennet
- Fin. Sec'y - Beatrice Cameron
- Treasurer - Fannie Hack, Thurman

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### MEMBERSHIP DUES and FINANCES

- \$1.00 Single membership
- \$2.00 Single membership, & Quarterlies
- \$3.00 Corresponding membership, Quarterlies mailed.

Mrs. Bernice Maxam, chairman of the recent card party project, June 3rd, is very pleased to report that it was an outstanding success. Ticket sales and donations netted nearly \$100.00. Our sincere thanks for the wonderful cooperation of members and friends!