

THE TIMES OF HALCOTT



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BELLS!

One of my favorite parts of the holiday season is decorating the house. As each decoration is unpacked, a flood of memories comes back such as where the piece came from, who lovingly handed it down, where it was displayed in Christmases past, and so on. Truly, each decoration tells a special story. This year, as I'm beginning now to unpack those memories, I recently came across a holiday favorite, a gold bell that we put up in the kitchen to adorn either the back door or the long garland across the room. I like bells, especially this time of year, with their beautiful sound and form, and this bell makes me think of all sorts of bells and their uses. Of course, as a live-

stock owner, I can't help but think, too, of the bells that are used on cows and sheep, those lovely little "singers" that brought music to the hills and fields wherever they were found. In this article, I would like to share a bit of what I have learned about the use of bells on sheep. Sheep bells were used in many places in the world including the southern counties of England, the Pennines and the Welsh uplands where large flocks occupied the vast pastures there. Though bells are not as prevalent as they once were and are mostly now found in country museums, visitors to some mountain regions in Europe today still can be treated to the lovely sounds coming from among the forests and fields where sheep

graze.

Most bells of earlier times were supplied by shepherds who typically worked for other people who actually owned the sheep. Because shepherd's wages tended to be rather meager, most shepherds could afford only about thirty or so of the bells. A shepherd chose which sheep to fit with a bell by carefully observing each sheep's behavior. Sheep that liked being leaders out at the fringes of the flock were fit with bells that could be heard from long distances whereas sheep that were more timid and stayed nearer to the shepherd were fitted with smaller more musical bells. Each bell was attached to the sheep with a leather strap or a hand carved, wooden yoke.

Bells varied some in style, size and materials used to make them. A popular style was made of sheet metal by the local blacksmith. These inexpensive bells, which could be heard from far away, were 3-6 inches long and were called "cluckers" or "cluckets". Thus, when the flock was heard returning from the day's allotment of pasture the shepherds often said, "Here comes the cluckers!". Another kind of bell was cast in bell metal by bell founders so it was more expensive. These cast bells were commonly shaped like an upside down cup but others were either spherical or bell-shaped styles.

Why use bells on sheep? They served two main purposes: One, they allowed the shepherds to know the whereabouts and condition of their flocks. The bells made

different sounds depending on what the sheep were doing, so based on what the

shepherd heard, he could assess the welfare of the flock without actually seeing them close by. For example, when the sheep were quietly eating or walking to new grass or water there was a soft, rhythmic clunking sound. A sheep shaking its head to rid itself of flies elicited a short peal from the bell. However, when there was danger such as strangers or unfamiliar dogs in the field, a loud more continuous noise from the bells was heard. Obviously, bells were especially helpful to the shepherds in dark, foggy weather or in forested areas where it was difficult if not impossible to see the sheep.

The second purpose was that the bells' lovely sounds brought a source of comfort to the shepherds who often had to toil long hours alone. Indeed, a shepherd of years gone by was quoted as saying, "It is lonesome with the flock on the downs. More so in cold, wet weather when perhaps you don't see a soul all day-on some



days not even at a distance, much less to speak to. The bells keep us from feeling it too much. They are company to us. We know what we have them for, and the more we have the better we like it." No doubt countless shepherds were both aided in their work and comforted by the pastoral symphony down through the ages and I wonder if perhaps those early shepherds, the ones chosen to hear first of the miracle birth of baby Jesus, were among them. **JD**

Nina Kasanof adds:

Perhaps some *Times of Halcott* readers know the term "bellwether." It's usually used to indicate a leader, or an indicator of tendencies, or, politically speaking, an area where the political tendencies reflect those of a larger area.

Bellwether derives from the English practice, going back to the 13th century, of bellling a castrated ram (wether), who served as leader of his flock of sheep. Thus the sound of the bell indicated the location, and perhaps tendencies, of the flock.

ELK CREEK BRIDGE OPEN!

As the *Times of Halcott* goes to press, the Elk Creek Bridge has re-opened for business, following the ravages of

Tropical Storm Irene 16 months ago. Susan Herzog took some pictures of the day the huge beams were installed. Modern technology is amazing. Take a look!



INTERNET TO THE GRANGE

Have you noticed the cars in the Grange parking lot, poised with motors running? They are receiving their e-mail!! Through the dedicated efforts of Margaretville Telephone Company (MTC), there is now DSL up to the Town Grange Hall.

This is a great step forward towards high speed internet for our town. Of course, most of us live further up the valley than the Grange Hall. Glenn Faulkner of MTC feels that service to the Grange Hall is just the first step, the first foot-hold, and has been fighting for a grant to extend the service up the valley. As this is being written, there is yet another application in the works. Keep tuned, keep patient, keep fingers crossed! *IK*

SAP

The Bouton boys started working at a young age. The photo shows Dennis



Bouton on the left and his cousin, Russell Bouton, standing to the right. As this photo was taken, the boys had just loaded a stack of sap buckets onto Dennis' trailer which was hooked to his John Deere tractor. Their dads, Donald and Carson Bouton, were soon to be tapping more maple

trees and the boys were ready to hang buckets on the trees to catch the sap.

Photo taken around 1960 by Marilyn (Bouton) Gallant. Story written and photo submitted by Kathleen (Bouton) Mech and Marilyn (Bouton) Gallant.

SUPERSTORM SANDY - OUR COMMUNITY RESPONDS!

How could we not? After the outpouring of kindness to our area after Hurricane Irene, we have no choice but to reciprocate. All it takes is an idea, a bit of organization, and get out of the way!

Thanks to Elena, Nan and Lee, Now and Then Video, and Nancy Ballard's nod of approval for the use of the Grange. In addition to our own Halcott giving, folks from Grand Gorge and Roxbury to Margaretville and Andes to Fleischmanns were very generous. After all, around here the concept of "community" is broad. Gone are the days when a hamlet or

village was its own little enclave; we are interconnected through banking and shopping, schools and radio, the Catskill Mountain News and eating out. Who hasn't gotten tires from Beckers in Grand Gorge? So when a call goes out, response is fast and big. Within a week, the Vly

Mountain Spring Water truck was loaded and on its way. Although the original plan was to unload at the Red Hook Initiative in Brooklyn, they were swamped with donations. Julie and Tarah DiBenedetto had things for specific families in Coney Island, so that was the first stop. Around the corner was the Salt and Sea Mission Church, which takes care of the homeless. They were so grateful for

hundreds of people all week without toilet paper. The second little miracle there was the food we unloaded from CitiHope in Andes; it turned out that 26 years ago, CitiHope had worked with Salt and Sea as a fledgling organization!

Next stop was supposed to be Firehouse Rescue #5 in Staten Island. But Vinnie couldn't meet the truck at the designated spot, and directed Michael down

the Island to a field where a command center had been set up in the midst of the worst devastation. A few blocks down was a roadblock due to a gas leak, and they wouldn't let the truck through. Michael could see lots of people past there though, and one call from Vinnie, got the Hal-lowed Sons

Biker Club involved. One word from the top biker, and the truck was

half of the truckload, including cases of toilet paper, which the pastor had prayed for that morning. You can't take care of

allowed to proceed. Michael parked the truck next to the military humvees, and the rest of the truck was unloaded.



In photo above, Simone, Harlan, and Claire Norwick, Nancy Reynolds, and Elena and Julie DiBenedetto work at the Halcott Grange Hall to sort and load donated goods onto the Vly Mountain Spring Water truck for delivery to Coney Island and Staten Island.

Thank you to everyone who answered, and is still answering the call. As with Fleischmanns, Margaretville, and Prattsville, and even still as with the Gulf Coast, many areas of New York and New Jersey will spend years getting back to a “normal” for their residents. Every little bit we can do is huge.

PD

In the Dead of Winter

How many of us are familiar with the blank stare that accompanies the question of “What do you DO up there?” when we try to explain where we live. Especially in winter.

But, oh, my, there is so much that demands attention! Take birds, for instance. As I was washing up the dishes the other day, keeping an eye on the bird feeder out my window, I realized that one of my favorite activities is bird-admiring. I can’t call myself a bird watcher, as I am a total illiterate in ornithological matters. But for anyone who’s awake and aware, there are wonderful surprises flying around this valley. There were eagles this past summer. (See *TTOH* vol 58). There are great blue herons loping along in the sky, evoking great blue curses from local fishermen. There are turkeys, whose clumsy flights make me wonder whether there was a design flaw at their creation. There are turkey buzzards, huge dark and sinis-

ter presences circling slowly, looking for death.

All of these get my respect and sometimes my breath. But how about the lowly little chickadee? He is a constant visitor at my feeder, he is exceedingly polite unlike the squabbling gold finches,

and he is very delicate in his reminders to me that the feeder needs replenishing. A little flurrying flourish around my head as I go to the garage is all it takes to shame me into refilling. What’s not to love about this little imp in wings?

I found in my cybersearchings that, unlike Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal, both male and female and even juvenile chickadees have the same plumage. In gathering food, they hide all those little seeds that they grab from my feeder – each in a different location, all of which, thousands of which (!) they can remember. I found it particularly endearing to read that Black-capped Chickadees are monogamous and form long-term pair bonds. When making a nest, they look for cavities in rotting wood that they can hollow out and shape to their liking. The lady is the nest-builder (how do they know these things if both look alike?) When she’s ready, she produces 6 to 8 eggs that she incubates for 12 to 13 days,



while the husband feeds her.

Chickadees are masters at bird-song and the guy uses his prowess to court the gal through trills and vocal frills to beat the band (and the other males). I only recognize the basic “Chickadee-dee-dee!” and love to repeat it after them, almost as an automatic response. But I guess I’d better be careful in what I “say.” Apparently, they telegraph threats by adding more “dees” to the cry.

For those of us who have the internet, there is quite a world of bird-watching and counting out there. Our own New York State Cornell University has a huge website that includes opportunities to sign up for bird-feeder counting and other activities helpful in predicting the waxings and wanings of bird populations.

In the end, how could I explain to my citified friends the thrill I get from watching the little ducking and diving, fascinating fluttering of the curious chickadee? It’s all part of the magic of living in Halcott. And as everyone knows, “you can’t get here from there.”

IK

JOANN KELLY CATSOS

BASKET-MAKING WORKSHOP

Friends will remember the wonderful exhibit that nationally acclaimed basketmaker JoAnn Catsos and her husband put on at the Halcott Fair this year. We are very excited to report that she has agreed to present a workshop here in Hal-

cott on Saturday, April 20th, 2013 for just a few people who would like to learn how to make baskets. Costs for the day’s work will be about \$100 a person, and this includes the materials for the basket that will be made. Several have already signed up. If you are interested, please e-mail me at inne-skas@wildblue.net We will create a waiting list if we have more applicants than space and we will ask JoAnn if she can repeat the workshop some time later in the year. This is an opportunity of a lifetime. **IK**

RECYCLING

Plastics: ONE! TWO! THREE! FIVE! No other plastics accepted! I received a package the other day with plastic pillows used as the stuffing to keep my items from rattling in transit. These plastic pillows were green and silky and the message on the outside read, “EP Flex Renew... Please recycle.” I wanted to. But it was marked “4.” I couldn’t put this in Halcott’s plastics recycling stream.

That our recycler only takes certain types of plastic is a difficult concept for the conscientious housekeeper, who wishes to recycle all that is plastic. But Greene County Solid Waste does not take plastics that do not have within the “chased arrows” on their bottoms the numbers 1,2,3 or 5. It’s puzzling to wonder why cottage cheese containers, for example, or some yogurt containers are not recyclable in our County. Our highway crew was told by the gents who

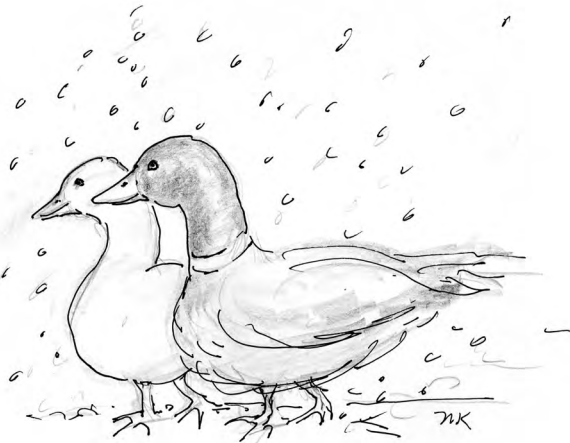
pick up for Greene County Solid Waste that Halcott does not follow the numbers on recycling, with the probable result that the entire plastics collection gets thrown into the garbage. This totally negates our efforts to help with the environment. Please take a good look (sometimes a magnifying glass is needed) before you send your plastics to the recycling center. Glass, tin, newspaper and magazines/junk mail need no such divisions. **IK**

longer in the serious-city-traffic. Their leisurely “pit-pat-waddle-pat” as Beatrix Potter would have it, reminds me to take it easy. **IK**

HALCOTT’S ONGOING EMERGENCY PLAN

Our emergency plan committee has begun to form a procedure that seems flexible and reasonable. Its central point is the establishment of an emergency operations center at the Grange Hall in case of an emergency. Town members can contact this center (254-5401) with questions, come to the Grange if shelter is needed, or call for information.

However, it becomes clear as we go through this exercise that a lot depends on our town members not only being well-informed about procedures but in return keeping us well informed about any special circumstances you may have. In the last issue of *The Times of Halcott*, we suggested that you sign up for Greene County’s “reverse 911” system called Red Alert. This “rapid emergency notification system” will contact you on either your land line, your cell phone, or your e-mail (or all three) in case of a critical community issue, such as weather-related events. In addition, town members with special needs are encouraged to look into the “Yellow Dot” program offered by the Greene County Sheriff’s Department. We will be keeping a list of townspeople who are vulnerable or at risk in an emergency. If you feel yourself to be one of



DUCK, DUCK... GOOSE?

As I drive home along Greene County Route 3, I love to see the web-footed pedestrian traffic in front of Yohei, Erica, Olivia and Adele Suyama’s house. The ducks (geese?) seem to be extremely understanding about the huge hunk of metal barreling down upon them and hustle themselves out of the way quite nimbly. It’s a reassuring sign that I am no

these, would you please notify the Town Supervisor (254-9920) or the Fleischmanns Fire Department? We will try to keep your special needs updated in our list. If preparing for an emergency is looked at as a joint effort shared by townspeople and officials together, then we have much greater chances for success. **IK**



Farmer's Almanac Dec 2012:

For the Northeast: **1st-3rd.** Snow for Mid-Atlantic States to New England, then clearing. **4th-7th.** Unsettled. **8th-11th.** Some snow New England. Wintry mix Mid-Atlantic. **12th-15th.** Snowstorm with significant accumulations down to Maryland, Virginia, then fair, cold. **16th-19th.** Unsettled. **20th-23rd.** Snow from Pennsylvania and New York into Maine... then clearing, very cold. **24th-27th.** Some snow Christmas. **28th-31st.**

Stormy period New England, with heavy wet snow and sleet. Then fair and cold.

PASSAGES

Welcome to Molly Elizabeth Kasanof, 7 lbs 10oz, arrived November 25th, 2012, daughter to Vanya and Jennifer Kasanof and granddaughter to Tony and Innes Kasanof and Liz and Richard Neff. Sunday's child is full of grace!



Congratulations to Marshall Bouton who won the Greene County Volunteer Firemen's Association and Ladies Auxiliary Community Service Award. Admittedly, he did win it last June, but we are just now getting around to publishing it. The accomplishment remains a big one and Marshall is just one more example of

the caliber of character that is produced in



this small but mighty town.

Congratulations, also, to the hunter who shot this gorgeous 10-point buck. Come to think of it, the hunter is pretty gorgeous, too. Warren Reynolds is pictured here with his catch.

A HALCOTT CHRISTMAS

Every year, the first Saturday of December brings many children, many parents and even many grandparents to the Halcott Grange to celebrate the arrival of the holiday season. This tradition is one of the oldest and longest in Town (see Pattie Kelder's article in The Methodist Times of Halcott, next page). In the accompanying photograph here, Lindsay Day is doing a fine job of narrating the Christmas story. The angels as always, are seraphic.



brightly flashing fire truck, carrying a sack on his back with exciting bulges. Cheered on by his admirers, Santa doles out presents to the anxious and sticky fingers, curly heads, and wide eyes that await him. It is a beautiful start to a season of wonder. **IK**





The Times of the Halcott Methodist Church

Winter, 2012 *Pattie Kelder, Correspondent*

Time Capsule: Over the last few years, stories, artifacts and memorabilia were collected for a time capsule. Just before Thanksgiving it was buried on the church lawn for a future generation to discover.

Sunday School: After a break of a few years, Sunday School has started again. Come join us at 10:00 Sunday mornings this winter for Bible stories, music and projects. Bring your friends and neighbors, and parents too.

Winter/Spring Calendar: Call or watch for information about an Ash Wednesday service, a Lenten study, Lenten lunches, Holy Week services and an early spring pancake supper. Yum!

A Halcott "Christmas Past"

I might not have noticed it if I hadn't been going through things for the Time Capsule. It was a just a yellowed typewritten sheaf of papers in our box of Christmas pieces for the Grange Hall, an announcer's copy of the 1970 program. Yet, having recently pored through various handwritten reports from Claretta Reynolds and Dorothy Bouton for the time capsule, something caught my eye. There, on the top of the program, was a simple inscription "Reynolds" in Ruth's hand. Drawn in, I started reading the only program known to predate the 1990s. There was no indication as to who authored the contents, but along with a cohesive theme indicating thorough advance knowledge of what all the children would be performing, I noticed some introductions embedded in the script. This was not a short program! As I read, I realized this might interest *TOH* readers, even those who didn't know the children back then or see The Christmas Guest reenacted on the stage this year. . . so here is most of it.

Christmas Program – December 19, 1970

Announcer: The regularly scheduled program will not be seen tonight so that we may bring you the following special. The sponsors have relinquished their commercials so the program can be presented without interruption.

(Curtain opens with Sunday School carolers putting

finishing touches on the Christmas tree. They are singing "Oh Christmas Tree")

Host: Good evening everyone and welcome to our annual Community Christmas Program. Our carolers are here, all our regulars and guests. Please join with us now and sing some familiar carols. Everybody sing.

Host: I'd like you to meet our carolers – Peggy Reynolds, Gary Reynolds, Mary and Dennis Bouton, Pattie and Andy Kelder, Sara Ortloff, and I'm Jan Kelder. We'll be hearing more from them later. Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd like to present our first guests tonight, the Menzies girls, Mary and Margaret. Come on stage girls. Welcome to our show. Mary, tell us about the holidays. (Mary speaks) Margaret, I understand there's something you like to do at Christmas. Would you tell us about it? (Margaret speaks) Gee, girls, that sounds like fun!

And now let's welcome our next guest, Marie Foster. She may be small, but she has a nice message for us. (Marie speaks) Marie lives just across the road. Her daddy works for Dr. Fairbairn. Thanks, Marie, that was cute!

We have a special feature on our program tonight. We all want to get things, especially at this time of year. But let's look in on this family that wants to give instead. ((Skit written and directed by Wanneta Finch with "Away in a Manger" and "Silent Night" at the end.))

Host: The part of Gramps was played by Brad Finch, Father was Doug Finch, Mother was played by Pattie Kelder, Aunt Wanda by Wanda Finch, and the children were Eileen Clark, and Debbie and Valerie Bouton. They were joined by the Carolers who came in singing. Thank you for your timely message. (Everyone leaves stage except Jan)

I see Kurt and Jennifer Babcock in the audience. Would you please come up on stage? Hi, kids. Kurt, what are you holding? (Kurt speaks) Could I see him? He is cute, isn't he? (give back bear) (Jennifer speaks) I like your

doll, Jennifer. You haven't lived in Halcott long have you? Where did you live before you came here? And now you live up by Grandpa Van's? . . . Thanks for coming to our show.

There's the Gallant children all the way from Delhi. Come on up here and see us. You know folks, they sing very well. Maybe I can get them to do a song for us. Hi Jacqueline, Lorraine, and Dean. Are you going to sing for us tonight? What would you like to sing? You go ahead now and we'll listen. (Children sing) Very pretty! Are Grandpa and Grandpa Bouton here? Do they like to hear you sing? We did too. Come and see us again sometime, will you?

I talked to Sharon Finch before we went on the air, and you've just got to hear what she told me. Sharon come up and tell everybody what you're wishing for. (Sharon speaks) Sharon, do you think the old gent will make it here on the snow we already have? Well, you stay around after the show, and maybe we'll find out.

I hear Debbie Haynes is doing her share of wishing. Would you share your thoughts with us. Debbie? Sure, come on and tell us all about it. (Debbie speaks) I kinda think a lot of us here might like to go, Debbie. Do you think there's enough room? Well if we do go, Santa's pack will have to be pretty big. We'll see you Deb. (Carolers enter)

Host: I see the carolers are ready to sing again! All you people in the studio sing too.

Announcer: We interrupt this program to bring you the following special news bulletin. Tomorrow

night, at 8:30, there will be a candlelight service at the church here in Halcott Center. The Story of Christmas will be told by slides and carol singing. The lights are turned out near the end of the service, and the glow of candlelight fills the church. It really is a beautiful sight. Everyone is invited to attend. We now return you to the program already in progress.

Host: We have a cheerful little girl here tonight. Her name is Tammy Kratochvil and she has something to tell us. (Tammy speaks) A nice little piece from a nice little girl.

Well folks, we all know why we're here and Denise LeBeau is no exception. Ladies and Gentlemen, Denise LeBeau! (Denise speaks) Where do you live? Do you like living in Halcott? Do you think Santa will come to your house? I hope so. Merry Christmas, Denise.

Christmas is such a busy time of year – shopping, baking, the department store Santas – that often the real meaning of Christmas is lost. To help us remember the real Christmas Spirit, the Halcott Sunday School will now present the story of The Christmas Guest.

The Bible is filled with stories of men who prepared, willingly and sometimes unwillingly, for service to God. Preparing isn't always something we consciously do. Years ago most of us learned hymns and scripture readings which prepared us to make this Christmas a Christ-centered celebration. We prepare – unaware. The shoemaker in this story tonight is – unaware.