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1851 - 1976



# HALCOTT TOWN

## 1851 - 1976

This Booklet is published by  
The Town of Halcott  
to celebrate the 200th Anniversary  
of the American Revolution  
and the 125th Anniversary of the  
Establishment of the Town of Halcott

The following have contributed  
to this Booklet:

Emerson Kelly	Maple Syrup
Claretta Reynolds	Boarding Houses
Audrey Johnson	Grange
Alice Bouton	U.S. Post Office
Myron Morse	Creamery
Ruth Kelder	Church
Edith Westlake	Ladies' Aid
Donald Bouton	Farming
Robert Johnson	Supervisors
Robert Johnson	Old Pictures
Ruth Reynolds	Map
Audrey Johnson	History
George Streeter	Stores
Kenneth Streeter	Sawmills
Mary Eignor	Home Bureau
Mary Slavin	Health Club
Hazel Crosby	Sketches

Community Service Contest for the Grange. Several work bees were formed and projects started for the benefit of the Town of Halcott.

The enthusiasm of the grangers, friends, neighbors and others from nearby towns all helping to complete these projects was something very special. Author Carl Cramer tells it best in his book, "Dark Trees to the Wind." The result of the contest was that Greene Valley Grange won first place in the state and second place in the nation.

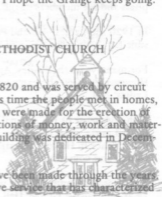
Some of the lasting community projects of that contest are the beautifully remodeled Grange Hall, the dairy D.H.I.A., the State Camp Site Lean-to in Turk Hollow, the fire ponds around town, the cemetery vault, and a library containing several hundred books. The Grange Hall is also used for Town Board meetings, as a voting place, and for bazaars and church programs.

In 1974, Greene Valley Grange celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary. Mrs. Gertrude Mead Blish, daughter of Jefferson Mead, was invited to attend. She is the only living member of the first meeting of 56 people who organized the Grange; Mrs. Blish also was elected Flora at that time. The minutes of the first meeting were read to her and she said, "Yes, my people owned the Town Hall, now the property of Victor Peet. I grew up in Halcott. It's a good place to live, good neighbors there, it still seems like home to me. I hope the Grange keeps going."

### THE HALCOTT METHODIST CHURCH

The church was organized in 1820 and was served by circuit riders for 20 years. During this time the people met in homes, barns and schoolhouses. Plans were made for the erection of a "meeting house" as subscriptions of money, work and materials were received. The new building was dedicated in December of 1849.

Changes and improvements have been made through the years. The church continues the active service that has characterized it since its organization.





## THE HALCOTT LADIES' AID

In the year 1912 Pastor Withey and a group of ladies organized the Halcott Ladies' Aid. This was a church organization formed to help raise funds for the benefit of the church.

Some of the organizing members were Abbie Crosby, Eliza Griffin, Nora Jenkins, Effie Kelly, and also Addie, Mary and Mima Van Valkenburgh.

These ladies held their meetings in members' homes and worked very hard making quilts, aprons, rugs, fancy work and many other articles which could be sold at a bazaar held annually.

The funds raised at these bazaars provided stained glass windows, chairs, carpet and many other items needed in the building and upkeep of the Halcott Church.

The Ladies' Aid also provided gifts for children in homes, hospitals and for members of the community in need.

In 1920 the Ladies' Aid and Pastor Van Burkalow were responsible for the incorporation of the Halcott Cemetery.

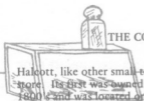
For many years the Ladies' Aid was known as the W.S.C.S. However, in 1960 the name was changed back to the Halcott Ladies' Aid.

Although most of the original members have passed to their reward in the great beyond, a Ladies' Aid organization is still in existence in Halcott and still contributes to the welfare of church and community.

This year the Annual Bazaar will be held on Wednesday, July 14 at the Halcott Grange Hall.

## DATA FROM TOWN CLERK DONALD BOUTON'S MINUTE BOOK

- 1855 Paid to Austin Chase \$5.00 for use of his house to hold election and town meetings.
- 1861 First mention of town house charge—\$8.00.
- 1862 First record of plank for bridge—\$5.26.  
Books and blanks for town business— .63.
- 1866 First mention of Poor Master charge for the year—\$2.00.  
Later changed to Welfare Officer.
- 1868 Town invested in Railroad Bonds. The interest on Bonds very high.
- 1870 Bill presented by Eli Jenkins for surveying roads—\$13.50.
- 1871 Purchased desk for Town Clerk's office—\$25.00.
- 1876 Jacob Fellows presented bill for ballot boxes —\$1.50.
- 1877 First mention of dog money collected—\$27.45.
- 1878 Taxes collected: \$170.50.
- 1889 First Board of Health organized.
- 1904 Total amount paid to Roswell Bouton, Commissioner of Highways, for labor and other expenses on roads and bridges; also for scraper for Districts 9 and 19—\$47.34.
1904. Claims for sheep killed—\$286.43. Amount allowed—\$45.57.  
'05
- 1907 L. VanValkenburgh was authorized to put a tongue in a road machine for \$1.50.
- 1908 Purchased a road machine for \$225.00.
- 1909 Salaries of Town Clerk and Supervisor—\$10.00. Town Superintendent of Highways, \$2.52½, each day worked.
- 1910 Voted that there be no money raised for clearing roads of snow.
- 1914 Voted to remove snow from highway by labor system.
- 1919 Stone crusher purchased—\$2,000.00.
- 1924 Steam roller purchased—\$3,500.00.
- 1926 First bill for car hire for Assessor—\$15.00.
1934. Tool shed—\$750.00.  
'35
- 1938 Voting Machine—\$680.00.
- 1940 Fire Protection—\$125.00.
- 1954 Budget \$12,904.70.
- 1976 Budget \$23,161.34



## THE COUNTRY STORE

Halcott, like other small towns, has always had a country store. Its first was owned by Isaac Moseman in the middle 1800's and was located on the left side of West Settlement Road. Later, it was moved to its present site on the opposite side of the road.

The store was enlarged and Isaac Moseman's son, James, ran the business. In the early 1900's James's son, Thorn, had the store, which he enlarged again, adding an ice cream parlor. In 1929, Thorn sold the store to Alfred Whitney, who died in 1934. After Alfred Whitney's death, his father, James Whitney, ran the store until his death in 1939.

James Whitney's widow, Mrs. Minnie Whitney, ran the store for a short time and then rented it to Marion Morse, who later purchased the building in 1942 and had the store until 1944, when it was closed and sold to George Crosby, who still owns the building.

The present general store is just across the road and is owned by Mrs. Ethel Streeter. The building also houses the Halcott Post Office.

## HALCOTT HEALTH CLUB



The Halcott Health Club was started in about 1946 by Willa Belle Streeter. The first meeting was held at the home of Kaye De Mott. Mrs. De Mott became the first president and Mrs. Streeter vice president; there was a large group of members.

Working closely with the Catskill Health Club and Mrs. Ferro, a very successful and useful organization for the benefit of the community was started.

Through the years four chestmobile clinics, diabetes detection and four polio clinics were held to help our community and surrounding areas.

A nursing scholarship fund was set up so that \$100 could be presented to any Halcott girl studying for a nursing career.

We maintained a loan closet until a few months ago.

At present, with few members and the cooperation of the community, we pack holiday baskets for extended care patients at Margaretville Memorial Hospital and local shut-ins.

### POST OFFICE



The first office was called West Lexington, and was supplied by a weekly mail from Prattsville to Griffin Corners (now Fleischmanns).

Austin Chase was postmaster at the time the town name was changed to Halcott Center.

Isaac Thorn Moseman was the next postmaster, but resigned in 1859. The post office was discontinued until 1863, when a new office was opened with Amasiah Hill postmaster. From about 1867 to 1868, James Miller had the office.

On February 20, 1874, Mrs. Thorn T. Moseman was appointed postmistress. Not long after, the twice weekly mail schedule was changed to thrice-weekly.

James Moseman was appointed postmaster in the late 1800's, followed by Thorn Moseman. Alfred Whitney was acting postmaster in 1929; James Whitney from 1934 to 1939; George Streeter from 1939 to 1940. Ethel Streeter served from 1940 to 1968; Willa Belle Streeter was acting postmaster from 1968 to 1970. Alice Bouton has held the post since 1970.

The Star Route from Fleischmanns to Halcott is still in effect with Helen Finch the present mail carrier.

## HALCOTT SUPERVISORS

1852-53 George Lawrence	1890-91 Sniffin K. Bellows
1854 Martin Morrison	1892 Arthur B. Jenkins
1855 Buel Maben	1893-94-95 Birdsill Moseman
1856 John P. VanValkenburgh	1896-97 Alonzo J. Morse
1857 Silas Lake	1898-99 Johnathan Ballard
1858 Conger Avery	1900-01 James Griffin
1859 Russell Peck	1902-03 Lemuel Kelly
1860 Isaac T. Moseman	1904-05 Robert VanValkenburgh
1861 Isaac Avery	1906-07 Leo J. Deamer
1862 George Lawrence	1908-09-10-11
1863-64-65 Isaac T. Moseman	Lorenzo Van Valkenburgh Jr.
1866 Eli C. Kelly	1912-13 Wallace K. Crosby
1867 Silas Lake	1914-15 Earl W. Jenkins
1868 Daniel VanValkenburgh	1916-17 E. Crosby Morse
1869 James Miller	1918-19 William D. Griffin
1870 Lorenzo VanValkenburgh Sr.	1920-21 Marshall Bouton
1871 Hiram Mead	1922 James M. Whitney
1872 Lorenzo Van Valkenburgh Sr.	1923-24-25-26 Chauncey E. Kelly
1873 David H. Griffin Jr.	1927 Fred Bouton
1874 Alexander VanValkenburgh	1928-29 Leo J. Deamer
1875 Gilbert Moseman	1930 Chauncey E. Kelly
1876 Silas Lake	1931 Leo J. Deamer
1877 James M. Moseman	1932-33 Myron K. Morse
1878 Daniel R. Morse	1934-35-36-37
1879 Buel Maben	Lorenzo VanValkenburgh Jr.
1880 John P. VanValkenburgh	1938-39 Leo J. Deamer
1881 Silas Lake	1940 thru 1949
1882-83 George F. Cross	Lorenzo VanValkenburgh Jr.
1884 Silas Lake	1950 thru 1961 Bernard Wadler
1885-86 Lorenzo VanValkenburgh Sr.	1961 thru 1969 Ward Reynolds
1887-88 Gilbert Moseman	1970 thru 1977 Robert Johnson
1889 Embree Scudder	

# Town of Halcott, Greene County

Town of Lexington



Scale of Miles



## HALCOTT

American History usually starts with the Indians; our Valley is no exception. Halcott had one Indian named Froman, who lived near the spring at the county line.

In 1813 Peter and John Van Valkenburgh and their widowed mother came over Vly Mountain and, finding a cabin empty settled there. In later years they cleared land on Turkey Ridge, then moved west to another farm, the beginning of West Settlement. Peter died in 1814, the town's first death. The same year the first birth was recorded: Rollins Covel, Neimiah's daughter. Her descendants still live here.

In 1816 the first apple trees were planted, on what is now the Dr. John Fairbairn farm. The Emerson Kelly farm had the first frame house and barn in town. In 1817-18 many families came over the Vly, Condon Hollow and Beech Ridge Mountains. Early industries came, like the potash factory. Ralph Coe's store, still standing, built in 1824, was later the gunsmith, carpentry and shoemaking shop of Theo Mabey. Justus Fellows was a gunsmith and his wife ran a carpet loom in their home. Early blacksmiths were Richard Norris in Turk Hollow, William Robinson, Horace B. Peet and the last, Byron Hauver in the 60's. In Mead Hollow, Cyrus Mead was a deaf turkey dentist. Sniffin Bellows built a house and back with a connection between over the stream and used a water wheel for churning. Others used dog mills for power. Crosby's stone house, the only one in town, was built in 1824.

A horse-wagon station was built at the top of Vly Mountain for travelers caught after dark. It was large enough for their sheep, cattle and horses, also. There were three taverns, at the late Libbie Kelder's, at Vandenburg's and at Nathan Appleby's. The latter is now Vermont House.

In 1847 a Baptist Church was built on the present Carl Egnor farm. Schools were built in the eastern part of town, one on the Lewis Faulkner farm, the first to be built, and later, one on the Ward Reynolds farm. School District No. 1, West Settlement, was built in 1835 and recently burned. District No. 2, Church District, formerly included with District No. 4,

was called District No. 13, West Lexington. In 1836 District No. 2 was built, and that burned in 1853. A new one was built on the same site, now Donald Bouton's home. District No. 3, Center District, was built in 1834 and used until 1871, when another was built by David J. Crosby for \$90.00. It was purchased later by Emerson Kelly. District No. 4, Johnson Hollow, was divided from District No. 2 in 1851. A new school built in 1869 had 25 pupils with the first teacher Adelia Crosby teaching for 15 weeks at \$2.00 per week. Beyond the 8th grade, pupils boarded in Margaretville until 1908, when a high school was built in Fleischmanns. Milo Mestyanek was the first bus driver, then Louis Crosby drove for 35 years. All the districts closed by the mid 1940's.

The Anti-Rent War of the 1840's did not affect the town much. One owner had 8 farms, but, when Sheriff Goslee came to serve the papers on tenants for back rent, a couple of "Halcott Indians" burned his papers. On the west side of Bear Pen Mountain, the anti-renters could sleep all night and see the length of Vega Valley, if the Sheriff's posse' came. "Little Thunder" was put in jail during the war, but later was released and married in the Kelly family.

George W. Halcott helped organize our town, was a former inhabitant and Sheriff of Greene County. His father, John Halcott, and his nephew, Julius, were drowned in the mill pond near A. Ewald's. They are buried across the road from the old store.

People find Halcott a pleasant place to live, with clear running water from mountain springs and beautiful views.

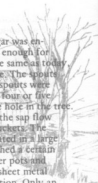
### CIVIL HISTORY OF HALCOTT



A petition for the creation of a town had been filed with the Board of Supervisors of Greene County, on the 19th of November, 1851. The State Legislature passed the petition as chapter 413 of the laws of 1852, and directed that the first town meeting be held on the first Tuesday, April 6th, 1852. This meeting was held at the tavern of James D. Vanderburgh which stood between the hill and Johnson Hollow roads on William Griffin's farm. A large clump of June roses now marks the site.

## MAPLE SYRUP

Years ago, making Maple Syrup and Maple Sugar was entirely a domestic operation. Each family made enough for their own use. The Maple trees were tapped the same as today, only done by hand, by boring a hole in the tree. The spouts and buckets were usually made of wood. The spouts were made of Sumac about an inch in diameter and four or five inches long, tapered on one end so as to fit the hole in the tree. The pith in the center was punched out to let the sap flow through. Later they had iron spouts and tin buckets. The Maple Sap was gathered by hand, then evaporated in a large iron kettle over an open fire. When it had reached a certain degree of sweetness it was transferred to smaller pots and finished on the kitchen stove. Later they had sheet metal pans which afforded more surface for evaporation. Only an experienced person could tell when it had boiled enough to make good Syrup or hard Sugar. Then came the evaporator which was housed in a "Sap House". Many improvements have been made in the construction of the evaporator.



Very little Sugar is made commercially now as the demand is mostly for Syrup, which is made, filtered, tested, graded and packed right in the "Sap House". The process of making good quality Maple Syrup is guided by the use of thermometers, hydrometers and lots of experience.

At the present time, some plastic tubing is being used, going from tree to tree, when the slope of the land is proper for the Sap to flow through it into a large tank that has been placed to catch it.

A Vermont Syrup buyer was once quoted as saying:  
"We buy some of our best quality Syrup in Halcott".

## HOME DEMONSTRATION

In the late 1920's a Home Demonstration Unit was organized in Halcott Center. It was part of the Delaware County Extension Service. The lessons consisted of cooking, sewing, chair caning, gardening, furniture refinishing and many other things. Members went to Delhi and Margaretville for lessons and took the work to the local unit. The organization is still in existence.

## BOARDING HOUSES



With the coming of the Ulster & Delaware R.R. New York City vacationers began to arrive in this area. Many farmers' wives decided to supplement their incomes by "keeping boarders". Whole families came with huge trunks and spent the entire summer.

A horse-drawn meat cart came each morning with fresh meat for dinner. Later, each house had its own ice house, filled from its own pond or from the Creamery pond. Many women raised their own chickens. To supplement from gardens, a "peddler" came three times a week with fresh fruits and vegetables.

In 1897 Mrs. Fannie Cohen bought a small farm in Elk Creek and built three houses, which are now separately owned. About 1904 or 1905 Arthur Wileman, a retired English tailor bought a small farm at the end of West Settlement and built a large three story hotel, which he called "The Snowdon". It is now the "Acropolis".

It is interesting to note what has happened to some of the many boarding houses. Anna C. Bouton's Mt. Star House is now owned by the O'Connors. The Alex Van Valkenburgh house burned, but, before it burned a portion was moved and is now the Arthur Kurzman residence. Joseph Todd's Sunset View Mt. House is owned by the DiNicola family. Cornelius Carmen's place burned, and a smaller house was built, and is now a hunting club. Addie Van Valkenburgh's, Ida Gordon's and Abbie Crosby's are still owned by the respective families but are not in operation as boarding houses. Lorenzo Van Valkenburgh's is the summer home of three families. Anna Moseman's was torn down and the property is now owned by George Streeter. Neva Johnson's property which was Horace Peet's burned. Effie Kelly's is now the efficiency apartments of the Lazy 'T' Farm. The Joseph Scudder property is owned by Victor Peet and is known as The Maples. The Parthenon is the summer residence of the Chapman family. Eliza Griffin's is Mrs. Louis Toboada's Apartments, and Ralph Todd's is now Mary Eignor's. Elnora Jenkins' is now Joyce Basliotta's and Arthur Gordon's now the Fazio family's.

## THE CREAMERY

The first creamery in Halcott was the Kingston Dairy and Ice Cream Co., built about 1888 or 1889 on land given by David J. Crosby, Grandfather of George and Louis Crosby. The land came over to the main stream, but water from a spring brook did not freeze, so A. J. Morse, my father, furnished land for an ice pond. One condition was that when the building was no longer used as a creamery, the land was to revert to him.

The Co-op Creamery was built and traded places with the Grange. Cement cooler vats were built by Jack Constable in 1910. After that date, the Creamery was operated by different owners, namely Mountainside Dairy, Walt Ostrander, Sam Shapiro, Dan Franklin and lastly Daitch Dairies. It has been idle for several years.

The Co-op Creamery was the present Grange Hall and was operated by an elected Board of Directors, who hired a manager. They sold produce during the summer to various dealers, one of whom was V. P. Jordan, who later built the Margaretville Creamery.

The Creamery burned 3-foot wood, which was cut and delivered during the winter by various farmers, usually Dan and David Miller. When they made butter, the skim milk was taken back to the farms and fed to the calves and hogs. Skim milk was rationed out by a weighing machine, so each farmer had his just share.

## SAWMILL

In 1920 my father, Ward T. Streeter, purchased a sawmill as he had a few acres of good timber and had done custom sawing for others. It was a Frick Mill and was operated with steam, a 40 horsepower engine and a 50 horsepower boiler. It was in operation for 35 years, closing down in 1955.

This was not the first mill in the Elk Creek Valley, as there still are traces of a water-powered mill on my farm. The site still shows where the spillway and dam were. I do not know the date or who operated it. There was a stone arch bridge connected to it which was destroyed by a flood in the late 1950's.

So another way of life phases out in this valley.

## FARMING



For more than a century, dairy farming was a way of life in our valley. Census figures of 1875 show 78 dwellings valued at \$38,200; 7,667 acres of improved farm land valued at \$262,640; 146 horses; 1,465 head of cattle, 7138 apple trees, and a population of 391. In 1860 Halcott peaked with a population of 504.

The early 1900's saw the farmers with a few pieces of horse-drawn equipment, mowing machines, dump rakes, wagons, possibly a hay tedder and a reaper and binder. The threshing usually was done by a custom machine run by steam power.

The fall of 1927 saw the coming of electricity and with it the inevitable changes. The lantern was replaced by the electric light switch. Electric motors replaced the gasoline engines for milking and for hay hoists and elevators. Electric hot water heaters and milk coolers took the place of the water vat and cakes of ice. Stable cleaners replaced the shovel.

By the late 30's and early 40's, the rubber tire tractor became commonplace and the farms had silo filling equipment. The 1960's and 1970's have brought kicker bailers, haybines, forage wagons and more powerful tractors to operate this modern machinery.

Despite these "labor savers," the shorter working hours and higher wages, many have left the farm. The creameries' demand for bulk milk also has forced many small farms out of business. Even government subsidies could not provide comparable income. Land developers and second-home owners, plus our natural environment, have changed the valley.

In 1948 there were 35 operating farms in Halcott. By 1951 the number was down to 27. This year finds us with only four remaining farms, 137 milking cows and a total population of 199.

Recently a real estate dealer remarked, "Anyone with \$100,000 to invest in a business shouldn't have to get up at 5 a.m. to protect it."

HALCOTT IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS



Leaving for the Mt. House for the summer.



Working the Main Road from Kellys to Peets.



Town Hall and Bridge to Van's Mill.

District No. 3.

Rounding the drive  
at the Acropolis.



## GREENE VALLEY GRANGE NO. 881



In 1899 the Greene Valley Grange was organized at the home of Jefferson Mead. The Greene County Farmers Grange was organized in Halcott the same year at the home of A. J. Morse.

In 1900 the Grange published its news and activities in the Greene Valley Bulletin edited by Sister Van, assisted by Lucy Crosby and Dora Weeks.

In 1904 Justice K. Fellows was named Manager of Exhibits for the area at the St. Louis Exposition. Many lecturers' hours were filled with talks of the sights our grangers had seen at the fair.

Between 1906 and 1916 State Grange Scholarships to Cornell were won by four young grangers from Halcott: Crosby Morse, Myron Morse, Morton Scudder and Martha Morse.

The Grange held its early meetings in the Town Hall, then in 1905 met in private homes until 1914, when it purchased the Halcott Creamery, the present home of the Grange. A Juvenile Grange was organized this same year.

Before the Farm and Home Bureaus were organized the Grange had established a Farmers Institute and learned about irrigation, lime and forestry, while the women took the Martha Van Rensselaer homemaking courses. The Farmers Institute is now the Extension Service. By 1925 Halcott was well represented at the Farmers Week Program at Cornell.

The year 1926 brought a new heater to warm the hall and the first Lady Master, Sister Eliza Griffin. In 1927 electricity was installed. The 1920's also brought lessons of better cattle care, and a milk tester for the men. The women were getting new-fangled things like pressure cookers and washing machines.

In the 1930's the Grange had some low times but the 1940's came with square dances, new members and another Juvenile Grange, with Sister Mildred Kelly as leader. The S&H Chairwoman, Ola Scudder Gardner, entered the Sears, Roebuck