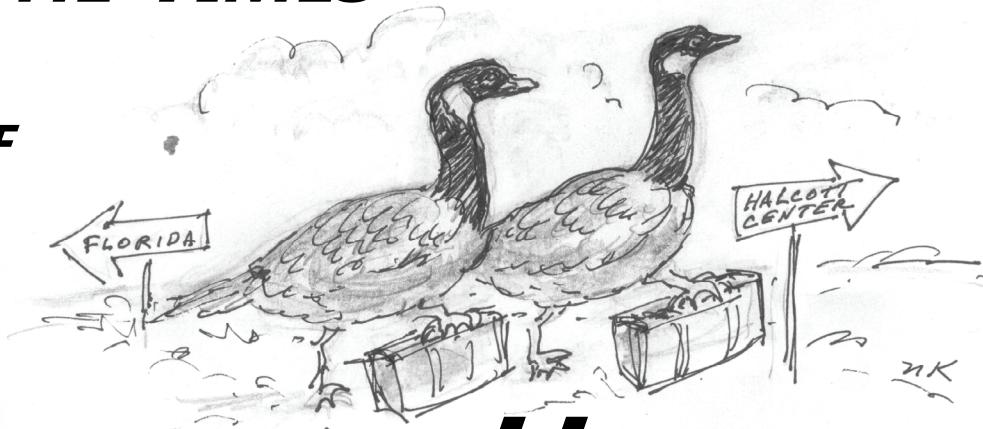


THE TIMES

OF



Spring 2011 VOL 54

HALCOTT

EDITORS: INNES KASANOF; PEG DiBENEDETTO; JUDY DiBENEDETTO; KAREN RAUTER. ART: NINA KASANOF

HOW SWEET IT IS

Carrie Bradley Neves

A surprising, steady, lukecool downpour washed over the city around the clock on the last Friday of February, making this year's seemingly relentless succession of blizzards and the common sight of white woolly mammoths of snowed-in cars, trucks, and vans lining glaciated curbs on every street a dim memory, a winter melted in a fever dream.

And rising up from the wet cement and iron and stone of stoops, the pine bough-lined tree wells and the dog parks, breathing from the mouths of the mews and the sleeping gardens, was the smell of spring—serpentine, like a hay hook, it caught me by the nose, turned

my head, and made me want to hurry home to Halcott and put my ear to a maple tree.

Of course, while Marc and I have learned many things about sap and syrup from our guru, Tim Johnson, *listening for it is not* among them. But it's hard not to think you could hear it in there when it begins to stir, like the music of snowmelt trickling under drifts and patchy ice. Because what a miraculous event! An explosive truth! Fantastical! Should not the tree be filled with whistles, chuckles, and guffaws, if not a roar? A thawed river of vital fluids connecting roots to upper branches and the buds that will make sun-grabbing leaves. And yet it is a secret sign of change, a whisper.

The real trick to knowing when

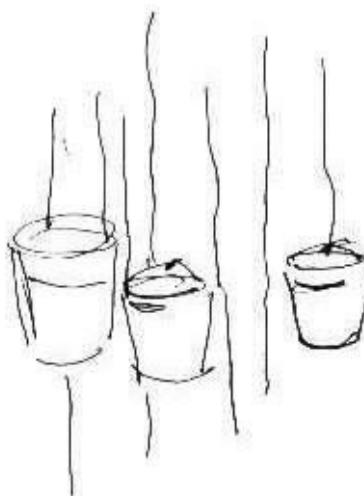
it's time, Tim taught us, is to watch the weather. A very specific set of meteorological events must converge to start up the sap. The temperature must fall below freezing at night but warm to well above freezing during the day, and alternate like that for a spell. The sun speeds the warming of the trees, so the southeast and southwest sides of the trees are best for tapping; and by the same token a wind coming from the north can shut off the taps like a faucet. The season may be as short as four days, if there's a good run at all, or as long as two weeks and more. Sometimes there will be two or three runs in a spring.

The first time Marc and I made our own maple syrup from our trees, there were still lumps of snow slumped around the hill, but the crocuses were peeking through exposed leafy corners. Tim ran us through our first paces, starting by teaching us how to identify sugar maples versus red (we still have to relearn every year). Then he showed us (actually, he drilled them for us) the correct way to drill the tap hole to create a slight downward angle with the spiles, the sturdy metal taps that both hold the bucket and deliver the sap through a spout (no fancy plastic tubing for our humble enterprise, but what a marvel that innovation is, bringing sap down the hills to holding tanks via gravity

and a warp-and-woof weave of tubes, like a giant woodsy loom). He told us the bucket rule of thumb: one standard sap bucket per tree with the same diameter as the mouth of the bucket, and so on.

In a community with so many life-long expert syrup makers, like our neighbors the Boutons and Ronald Morse down the road, it's a somewhat sheepish matter to admit how thrilling it was the first time I watched a drop of sap fall from the spile into the bucket and heard the inimitable ping. I felt like a gold prospector and an alchemist at the same time. I'm not even going to describe the dance of bugged-eyed shock I executed when we came out in the morning and our 14 buckets were overflowing. Like many rookies, I was surprised the sap isn't sticky; it's mostly like water, but with a tiny touch of sweetness, more like a mysterious energy than a taste, as if a fairy passed its wand over the top.

When it was time to boil our sap, Tim was our hero again, and this time his wife, Chris, came along to help. We positioned a dozen cinder blocks two high to make a simple three-sided rectangular fire box with an open top. For making syrup, or "sugaring," such a fireplace is called an arch. We built a good hardwood fire



inside and let it get nice and hot. Then we fit a large flat pan about eight inches deep across the top and filled it with sap. When that was boiling, we placed a roasting pan across one corner on top of the main pan to warm new sap before ladling it into the main pan, to avoid stopping the boil with cold sap.

The rest was easy! And one of the most relaxing activities I've ever known. We're in our fourth year now. It takes forty gallons of sap to make one gallon of

gling a hydrometer (a tool similar to a thermometer but which measures density instead of temperature) to test the done-ness of the syrup. And by the time the first ladleful of glowing pale gold potion, smelling of caramel and earth and holidays and memories as well as of maple is ready, and the pancakes are done, hopefully we have a gaggle of friends around the fire to eat and celebrate this sweet announcement of spring. If you see the smoke rising from our driveway this spring, walk on up!

DEAR FRIENDS:
IN EVERY SPRING ISSUE OF THE
TIMES OF HALCOTT WE RUN A
SMALL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN TO
RAISE MONEY FOR THE HALCOTT
COMMUNITY FUND WHICH PAYS FOR
THIS NEWLSTTER. PLEASE USE THE
ENCLOSED ENVELOPE TO SEND A LIT-
TLE CONTRIBUTION TO HELP COVER
THE COSTS OF PRINTING & MAILING.
WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!

syrup, so even a small operation like ours (our first year, we got a quart!) requires a day or two of boiling, and therefore many hours of sitting by the fire with the newspaper. We take turns watching the pan to guard against boiling over—a drop of fat, either a tap with a stick of butter or drop of cream will stop it—and doing odd chores and cooking. We practice at fina-

Every Time is a Good Time *Robin White*

The Zen Buddhist priest Wumen once wrote, “A hundred flowers blossom in spring, the moon shines in autumn, there is a fresh breeze in summer, and there is snow in winter. If your mind isn’t occupied with trivial matters, every time is a good time.”

As I write this, I can think back to about 5 or 6 people that have complained to me today about the weather these past few weeks. I can think of another 5 or 6 the day before that. You've got to admit, every winter those around us complain about the cold or about the snow, and every summer, there are the complaints about the heat or the humidity or the bugs. I don't complain, don't look for those “trivial matters”, I just look for the beauty in every season. In our valley, there is so much to appreciate and marvel at, there just isn't time to complain!

One recent morning, one of those



15 below zero mornings, in-between shivers I had to slow down on my way to work to look with amazement at the newly fallen snow. My driveway, my road, and all of the sur-

rounding hills were literally sparkling and shimmering in the morning sunlight. It was a dazzling display of beauty, and I longed to linger and watch the sun continue to rise and light up this spectacular display even further, but reality beckoned and I continued on to work, that wonderful sight filling my mind all day long.

Last summer, in the middle of one of those hot and humid weeks we often get in late August, I was taking an evening walk up our hill with my dog, Peggy, and had to stop and marvel at the beauty of a perfect spider web hanging between two tree trunks, covered with a glistening coat of dew. The artistry! The time it must have taken to create such a masterpiece! How quickly it could be completely destroyed by the next deer to step through that open space. In those moments, I completely forgot about how much I had sweated and suffered in the intense heat that day. It just didn't matter anymore.

There is such beauty in each season here in the Halcott Valley, and I am reminded of why I live here every day. We can't lose sight of the joy and wonder

of the first wildflowers in the spring poking through the melting snow, the immense bounty of the summer, the smell of that first woodstove fire in the autumn, and the silent grace of the first snowfall in winter. Clouds light up pink and purple to welcome the sunrise on so many mornings, and the crystal clear display of stars at night takes my breath away every time I gaze at it and wonder at its perfection. In our little section of this Earth, every time is a good time.

PHOTO CONTEST!

Help the Halcott Community Fund raise money for community projects. We are planning a 2012 Halcott Calendar with a prize-winning photograph for each month.

(The winning photographer for each month will be awarded the prize of priceless satisfaction!)

Enter your photo(s) in any of 12 (TWELVE!) categories, one for each month.

Enter as many photos as you wish. Photos should be of Halcott and Halcott-type subjects.

All photos must be received before June 1st.

Photos in digital format, should be at least 6X9 inches at 300 ppi or greater. Please send these to:

Greg Beechler, grbee55@gmail.com

Prints can be up to 11 x 14 inches. Negatives or slides are also an option. Negatives, prints and slides should be addressed to Vickers&Beechler, PO Box

817. Fleischmanns, NY 12430. They can be retrieved at the Halcott Fair.

Please include the category (month) you want each photo to compete in, and your full name.

We will sell the calendar at the Halcott Fair (July 16).

Thanks to Camille & Greg Vickers and Beechler for volunteering to set up this fundraiser. **IK**

SHEEP MAY SAFELY GRAZE

Spring is almost here! For the winter-weary among us, these words bring much hope and anticipation. Flower and vegetable gardens are being planned, long awaited outdoor projects such as painting and fencing are just around the corner and precious, memory making summer vacation details are coming together. Likewise, spring on the farm is a season of renewal and of vision coming to fruition. There's something very special about watching the landscape steadily burst forth with its wondrous beauty that has just been waiting...waiting...waiting... for the right conditions to bring everything into motion. Fields formerly covered in snow and ice thaw to reveal nourishing grasses and legumes that will sustain the livestock, as well as the wildlife, through the coming grazing season. Barns that serve as hay storage have been emptied of last year's bounty to make room for this year's harvest. And, of course, much new birth is seen in the cattle, sheep, fowl, and other animals that

grace the forests, valleys and hills.

As spring draws near, I can't help but look ahead with eagerness to lambing time. Every lambing season promises and delivers its own unique set of miracles. For example, last year we were blessed with two sets of triplets. Their arrival was both surprising and joyous. Even the mamas looked surprised at their numerous offspring! This year we have twelve pregnant ewes due to lamb, starting toward the end of April. We look forward to welcoming the new lambs and to seeing how they grow and develop. This year's lambs are sired (fathered) by "Zechariah", a growthy ram chosen from last year's lamb crop.

One of the questions we are often asked is, "What kind of sheep do you have?" so I thought I would touch on that just for interest to any of our readers who might stop by to take a peek at sheep. Actually, most of our sheep are crossbreds, meaning they are of more than one breed. All breeds of sheep--as well as all breeds of other livestock, poultry, horses, dogs, cats, etc.--have certain strengths and characteristics that make them well suited for particular uses and situations. Indeed, God generously provided us with, and entrusted us to care for, all kinds of animals that would fulfill some of our needs for food, fiber, work and companionship, and, over many years, careful breeders have taken on the call to that stewardship with zeal and seriousness. As a result, they have helped shape and develop the wonderful, diverse breeds that we see today.

So, which breeds do we have here?

Scottish Blackface, Cheviot, and Katahdin are the main ones represented. The Scottish Blackface is a breed I was unfamiliar with but that I've come to really like. Known as "Blackies" they are hardy, no-nonsense sheep that are outstanding, milky mothers and beautiful to look at to boot. In addition, the meat of the Blackface has a distinctive mild flavor that our customers enjoy. The Blackface crosses in our flock can be recognized by their slightly to very speckled faces and legs and long, thick wool coats. The one Blackface, who is quite a pet, is easily identified by her curly horns.

The Cheviot, like the Blackface, is a breed that was developed in the Border region between Scotland and England. The Cheviots have white faces and legs, blackish muzzles and feet, and pricked ears. Cheviot lambs, with their large, pointy ears, have an adorable elf-like appearance. Cheviots are great mothers and excellent foragers. The lambs are thick muscled and grow quickly.

The Katahdin is a hair sheep breed developed in Maine that sheds its wool in the spring. The ability to shed wool eliminates the cost and labor of shearing. The Katahdin is another low-maintenance, excellent mothering breed. One of our flock matriarchs, a ewe named "Elizabeth", is a half Katahdin with a brown speckled face that she passes on to her female offspring. She has been such a good mother and has produced such top-notch lambs every year that we have

several of her daughters in our flock.

Well, that's a brief look at our little flock. And, once "spring has sprung", we invite you to stop by and share in the joy of the season of new beginnings! **JD**

Local Radio Host Surfs The Airwaves Down Under

On a December trip to Great Barrier Island in New Zealand, Julian Rauter was given a chance to spell the local and gregarious daytime deejay "Lou" on Aotea FM 94.6 for about an hour in the small, solar-powered town of Claris. The tiny ocean town lies off the cost of the North Island, about a thirty minute flight by puddle jumper from Auckland. So that day both Aucklanders and Aoteans got a chance to hear music of some of our local Catskill bands, including Adam Johnson's Detour and Arkville's By Land or Sea. Locally, Julian hosts "Untitled" with classmate Alana Moskowitz weekly on Sundays from 3-5pm on WIOX Commu-



Broadcaster Julian Rauter in New Zealand

nity Radio 91.3 FM (or stream it at www.wioxradio.org). This opportunity is made possible for the two MCS 8th graders by the Greater Roxbury Learning Initiative, a cool org working with kids and technology. **KR**

Tangles on the Farm



Linda Kelly Armour:

When I was young, many of the farmers, my uncle included, used barbed wire to replace or supplement the gracious stone walls that lined the roads, outlined the fields, and separated one farmer's property from another's. The stone walls were silent visual reminders of the back-breaking toil that our ancestors had put into the land, clearing the fields to use them for pasture or hay, the stones from the fields creating the stone walls.

As the stone walls broke down in the pastures, or were torn down along the roads to widen them, barbed wire came

into use. The farmers drove fence posts in, and created wire fences of closely placed strands of barbed wire or a mix of regular wire fence with a strand of barbed wire at the top. Strands just close enough to keep the cows from slipping through. It certainly kept the cows in place. They didn't want to tangle with the sharp pointed steel barbs

placed every several inches along the length of the wire. It kept people in place too! At least most of the time...

We had a beagle named "Tinkle." Dad would sometimes take her rabbit hunting. One time Mom,

my brother, and I (probably about 8 or 9 years old) dropped Dad and Tinkle off at an unoccupied farm up the road to go rabbit hunting in the woods. We showed up a few hours later to pick them up at a time we agreed upon earlier. While waiting for Dad to arrive, I ducked under a single strand of barbed wire, about neck high, that closed off an unused driveway from the road. I wanted to go explore and play in the grassy field. When I heard Dad and Tinkle come out of the woods down the road, I started running for the road to meet them. It was dusk and I had forgotten about the barbed wire until I suddenly found myself lying on my back underneath it. When I hit it, it stopped my

head and upper body, but not my feet, which kept on going. The four inch checkmark it left on my neck was bleeding somewhat, but wasn't deep. A clean up and band-aid at home was all the medical attention I needed or got.

One time I was on the hill alone and, again at dusk, headed for home. Of course running was faster than walking, so that's what I did. Until I found myself in the middle of a scrap heap of coiled barbed wire that Uncle Gilbert had left in the pasture. Heck, the cows knew enough to stay away from it, so it was supposedly pretty harmless there. I carefully stepped through and out of the coils, but the back of my left knee was nicely sliced. Clean up and band-aid at home again.

My friends and I would often visit each other to play. There was no mall to hang out at, but we found plenty of things to do at each other's homes. One time Missy Haynes came over, and we were, of course, outside playing. We were in the pasture between my house and Uncle Gilbert's barn. The pasture fence was a regular wire fence with a strand of barbed wire along the top. At the corner of the pasture near the road was a large old maple tree to which the fence was attached. We had entered the pasture through a gate and had no thoughts about the barbed

wire. Until we encountered Uncle Gilbert's cows. It must have been just before or after milking time, because the cows were usually much further up the hill. Now most cows that I knew were plenty tame. When I had to get the cows from my Grandmother Kelly's night pasture, which was a distance from the barn, I would lead a cow over to the stone wall, climb up on the wall, climb up on the cow, and ride it back to the barn.

Grandpa Mech's cows were pretty much the same. But not Uncle Gilbert's. They could be ornery. As Missy and I tried to walk away from them slowly, they followed slowly, then faster after us. The faster we went, the faster they went, until we were running lickity split for the corner of the pasture to climb over the fence and escape them. A

large horizontal branch of the tree ran just above the fence and was the perfect "handle" to use to get over the fence. I climbed the fence and placed my left hand on the branch. My right hand I placed on the fence. The scar on my palm between my index and middle finger is a reminder of that event. Again, home doctoring, and the medical care was done!

I received many more cuts, scrapes, and scars throughout my childhood, as well as adulthood! But after those 3 encounters, I finally learned to respect barbed wire!



**Halcott
Community Garden News
&
Garden Stream Project
*Alex Brock-Baer***

Anyone interested in joining the garden this year can find an application in the Grange or contact Camille Vickers, camille.vickers@gmail.com or Alex Brock (whalenbrock@yahoo.com) Please get your applications in soon if you want a raised bed, as they're going fast!

Thanks to the efforts of Karen Rauter, the Town of Halcott is the recipient of a Catskills Streams Buffer Initiative Grant to create a model native plant garden at the Halcott Community Garden and town highway department shed site.

Sponsored by the Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Garden, this grant provides an excellent opportunity to learn how local plants can help stabilize stream banks. Community members from Halcott and nearby hamlets can participate in hands-

on planting and maintenance sessions to learn what is at the forefront of best practices in stream management and native plants. Please

consider attending a design planning workshop at the Halcott Town Grange on Saturday, APRIL 16 and help plan for the garden with hundreds of native plants, trees and shrubs that have been donated to



the project. Contact Karen Rauter or Alex Brock for more information.

PASSAGES:

Congratulations to Sasha Kasanof and Jennifer Viau who have a new baby, Katerina, born January 8, 2011, in Santiago, Chile, where it is sunny and warm!



And congratulations to Elena DiBenedetto who graduated (Magna Cum Laude!) from Roberts Wesleyan College on December 18, 2010 with a B.S. in Education (Early Childhood/ Elementary Ed).

FINALLY,

At the beginning of 2011, Halcott lost two of its strong pillars, Ward Reynolds and then Shirley Bouton, within a week's time. They both held this community firmly in their capable hands and their loss is huge. I met Shirley back in the early 80s when we started coming to Halcott. Vic Peet, Tony's uncle brought us to

the little house, once a school, to meet the Boutons. I loved shaking Shirley's hand. She had hands that were strong and yet smooth and soft, hands that over the years milked cows, beat syrup into maple cream, knit. They were praying hands.

Vic brought me to meet Ward that week as well. Ward was feeding the pigs when I first saw him. He had an infectious grin and again, strong, solid, confident hands. Between these two dear people, much history occurred. In other issues of *The Times of Halcott*, you can read about Shirley's beginnings as a foundling in New York City, and about Ward's quiet service to his country during World War II, but who can describe what they both gave to Halcott?

For one thing, they were bridges from an old-fashioned, gentle era spanning many years of turmoil, to a new-fangled Facebook age. A community is so blessed when it has such bridges! Through their memories and wisdom, we have been able to travel into the past to understand where we've come from and to look out over time to see where we are going.

Both Shirley and Ward were givers. They gave and gave and gave. And then gave some more. I suspect that their ultimate gift to us is the value of giving, helping others. Who hasn't felt the kind offers of Ward to help with plowing, teaching fly-fishing, house care-taking? And who hasn't been touched by the dear thoughtfulness of Shirley? When we lived in Moscow, far, far away from our

beloved Halcott, Shirley stopped at our house to take a picture of the fall foliage and sent it to us with the brief comment that she had been meaning to take this picture for quite some time, and finally got around to it. Such a burst of autumnal glory! The photo stayed on our refrigerator the entire time we were overseas, becoming curled and yellowed, but always reminding us of the wonderful friend who had sent it.

The two cared for the Town, sharing the duties of supervisor when no one else wanted it. Ward kept the eyes of

Greene County focused on tiny Halcott through his constant political activities. Shirley drove countless times to Catskill to research deeds, to pick up and distribute cheese to needy families, to attend to the business of the town. No song and dance attached. They just did what was necessary, maintaining a viable municipality in the face of exploding state mandates and the associated paperwork.

Halcott to me has always been a special place to live, in part because of the giving spirit that seems to be in the air. In the air? No, I would say more that this rare and special quality is settled firmly in the hearts of the real leaders of our community. We lost two at once in January of this year. Let us pray that they have passed on to us their special contribution and that we can continue to practice the civility and courtesy that these two strong pillars taught us. **IK**





The Times of the Halcott Methodist Church Spring, 2011

Pattie Kelder, Correspondent

Change of Pastors

Pastor Peg's father was seriously ill in the fall. He has improved, but she felt the need to move back home after Christmas to care for her parents who are no longer able to live alone. We miss her. The search has begun for a new pastor. In the meantime, the Rev. Adrian K. Todd has been conducting services in Halcott. We have been blessed to have his help.

Heaven's Gain

We lost two long time church members and good neighbors in January – Ward Reynolds and Shirley Bouton. Ward joined the church at a young age. I've been told that Claretta settled on a unique way to interest her teen in attending services – if he would attend, she would let him drive to church. It worked!

Shirley wore many hats in the church. She always enjoyed the sun streaming through the red glass in the memorial window as well as the hymns and

the stories behind them. Her favorite, *It Is No Secret* (what God can do; what He's done for others, He'll do for you.), captures how she shared her faith. You see, Shirley experienced many miracles in her life, from birth to more recent brushes with death. And she made no secret of what God had done for her.

Why Lent Begins With Ash Wednesday

Lent is a season of facing sin. Jesus called on God when facing temptation in the desert. How much more we mortals need God's help when tempted!

Why ashes? We are dust and to dust we return. If we weren't human, there would be immortality with no sin and no need for salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So we reflect on our sins in Lent and ask God for help.

Wearing ashes on the forehead is a reminder of our mortality and vulnerability. Ash Wednesday, therefore, encourages us

to rely on God as we journey through Lent and on through life.

CALENDAR

Please call for information on special services during Lent and for the date we will return to morning worship services. Please also watch for dates of covered dish suppers and the Dinner Salad Buffet enjoyed by many last spring.

March 9 Ash Wednesday

April 6 Lenten Lunch at the Grange Hall at noon – everyone is welcome

April 17 Palm Sunday – palm crosses distributed during worship
April 21 Maundy Thursday
April 22 Good Friday
April 24 Easter Sunday



Interfaith Bible Study of the Old Testament meets twice a month. Newcomers are welcome. Call for the time and place. Food pantry items are welcome at any church service. Communion is given and the Love Loaf missions offering is taken on the second Sunday of the month.



THE TIMES OF HALLCOTT
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