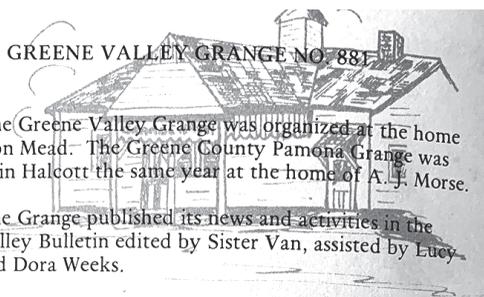


The Times of Halcott

thetimesofhalcott@gmail.com

Greene Valley Grange No. 881

An old booklet about our town, entitled HALCOTT VALLEY, was sent to me recently by Diane McDowell—whose Aunt, now deceased, had family in our area. The publication is dated 1976 on the title page, which includes an editorial statement: *“This booklet is published by The Town of*



In 1899 the Greene Valley Grange was organized at the home of Jefferson Mead. The Greene County Pamoona 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 Chair-woman, Ola Scudder Gardner, entered the Sears, Roebuck

Halcott to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the American Revolution and the 125th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Town of Halcott.” Contributors are identified as follows: *Emerson Kelly, Claretta Reynolds, Audrey Johnson, Alice Bouton, Myron Morse, Ruth Kelder, Edith Westlake, Donald Bouton, Robert Johnson, Ruth Reynolds, George Streeter, Keneth Streeter, Mary Eignor, Mary Slavin, Hazel Crosby.* The section on the Grange which I've quoted below is attributed to **Audrey Johnson**. The sketch is by **Hazel Crosby**.

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.”*

We too “*hope the Grange keeps going.*” This autumn two very different events took place there, each wildly successful in its own way. First there was a square-dance to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Hilton Kelly, with the *Tremperkill Boys* strumming and fiddling and calling. Many of them had worked with Hilton in the past, and so the occasion was sweetly nostalgic for them, as well as for those in the audience who had memories of Hilton calling square-dances and playing at the Grange’s annual Christmas pageant. The event, a benefit for the Halcott United Methodist Church’s restoration fund, was quite well attended. For some of us unfamiliar with the ins & outs of the dances, there was a bit of performance anxiety, but the Tremperkill Boys were generous in their explanations of the various moves, and the music was infectious enough that I, for one, stopped worrying about making a fool of myself as the evening wore on. There were, of course, those with more square-dancing expertise, and by the end of the evening their squares were *do-si-do-ing* and *grand-right-and-left-ing* in full swing—while my chosen amateur’s square was colliding and laughing with an equal vitality, one which proved quite infectious to those sitting and chortling nearby. Without exaggeration, I think I can say that a good time was had by all!

And then, organized by Julio and I, there was a concert by singer and multi-instrumentalist *Rachelle Garniez*. Nostalgia was in the air that night as well, for Rachelle gathered songs by artists who have recently passed away, performing her own versions of them for the packed house. Rachelle puts together a show like this every year, and performs it in New York City—but last year, and now this year, we up here in Halcott got a sort of preview, and we’re hoping to make it an annual event now that Rachelle has moved nearby, to Kingston, from Manhattan. In Halcott we are used to nostalgia for the good old days, but as new generations duel with the ticking of the clock, new tones of nostalgia arise—and it raised a tear to the corner of the eye to hear the audience at the show spontaneously singing-along to songs remembered from their youth, songs brilliantly rearranged by Rachelle for accordion or banjo.

The Grange, it seems, lives on! The acoustics are sublime, according to Rachelle, and there has even been talk of her donating a piano to the space—since we’ve discovered the sounding board of the old one to be cracked when we tried to have it re-tuned. Now we’ll just have to figure out how to fit it through the door . . .



Juvenile Grange #586

by Pattie Kelder

The National Order of Patrons of Husbandry (Grange) was established in 1857 to address the problems of farmers after the Civil War. This secret organization focused on agriculture and community service. A century later, in the 1950’s and early 1960’s, there was an active Juvenile Grange in Halcott. It was open to youth aged five through High School. In later years, kids (boys in particular) left Juvenile Grange earlier. Greg Finch and Kip Johnson bowed out by the age of 13, once big enough to sit on a bulldozer and occupy a tractor seat, respectively. Members generally came from all over Halcott, but there were some from Red Kill, Breezy Hill, Portertown and Fleischmanns. Most people interviewed had memories of the offices they held and the adult leader in charge. After a few years in the organization, kids including Collin Kelly, Walter Roberts and Linda Aley rose to the highest office and could chair the meetings.



l to r: Jane Ballard, Ellen Ballard, ? (first half hidden face in back), Evelyn Moseman (face half hidden), ? (unidentified girl), Shirley Maben (with camera).

Linda remembers her grandmother, Mildred Kelly, leading Juvenile Grange for over a decade. Gloria Sadowski recalls Ola Scudder in this role, perhaps when Mildred was absent for some reason. In the early 1960's, Mildred talked Pat Moran into replacing her. It was a great, albeit short experience for Pat, who was soon married with a family. Pat says the meeting protocol served as a wonderful tool for the kids when they had to speak in school or conduct meetings later in life. In fact, the adult Grange even footed the bill for Gloria to attend a week of Youth Leadership School at a college in Morrisville .

Louis Crosby, the contractual school bus driver, was able to let kids off the bus at the Grange Hall for meetings and related events. Monthly meetings were usually held the first Monday of each month. Kids arriving on time had to whisper a password to gain entrance; those arriving late or returning from a potty-call had to follow a more involved procedure to enter the main hall. Members had assigned seats according to the offices held and took specified paths to those seats while marching to music. Songs were also sung. Linda particularly recalls learning, "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and thinking it was the national anthem. Once all of this "floor work" was running smoothly, it was reviewed by Grange dignitaries from the county level, who rated it and provided feedback for improvement.

Of course, getting down to business at meetings had its challenges. Opportunities for socialization were limited for farm families. This, combined with pent up energy at the end of the school day, sometimes required a measure of strictness on the part of the adult in charge in order to stop boys from chasing girls or to end horseplay that included swan-diving off the stage. Otherwise, the gatherings and activities were enjoyable, especially the snacks. Usually adults took turns providing them, but Ellen Todd says sometimes one of the older girls baked a cake to share.

Monthly Events

Thanks to the 1955, 1957 and 1958 diaries of Marilyn Gallant, we know the general schedule for Juvenile Grange events. Further details of these gatherings were supplied by several other former Juvenile Grangers. Since the Grange—both the building and the organization—was the hub of the community, some activities were enjoyed by the whole family. Grange suppers, picnics, square dances and BINGO games were among them. Leaders went out of their way to find fun things to do. One Grange picnic even included swimming in a pool and playing on a playground.

Parties on some of the holidays were interspersed with staged presentations for the parents and visitors throughout the year. St. Patrick's Day, Mother's Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas were all celebrated with parties. For Mother's Day, the kids went to Mildred's house one year to make gifts of painted glassware. Another year, they all sang songs on stage for the mothers, with a live lamb as a prop. On Halloween, they had to change into costumes at the Grange Hall because costumes weren't allowed at school back then. The kids had a good time parading around the main hall past parents who handed out candy and awarded prizes for costumes in various categories.

At Christmastime, the kids gathered to practice at least three times before the big night. During one of the practices, there was a gift exchange of coloring books, card games, bubble pipes and the like. The evening program, itself, was known in communities from New York to Maine as the annual "Christmas Tree". Most folks interviewed recalled these evenings as the highlight of the year or as magical nights. The youngsters sang solos, played instruments, made speeches (i.e. recited poetry), participated in the Nativity pageant, enjoyed Christmas caroling with the audience and waited for Santa to hand out 2x5" boxes of assorted hard candy. Boys and girls from Juvenile Grange and Sunday School, as well as Jewish children, took part. Some years a Hanukkah presentation was included. Santa was Jewish some years (Morris Slavin or Artie Wadler) or Christian other years (Rev. Bill Campbell). Joyce Wadler shared how the dilemma over singing Christmas carols about the baby Jesus was solved; those lyrics were only mouthed by the Jewish kids. Ginger Jacobs recalled the year there were eight white-robed, winged angels across the back of the stage singing, "*Gloria in excelsis deo.*" Four of them, including Collin Kelly and Billy Johnson, were boys. What a big fuss they made, as only *girls* were supposed to be angels! The older girls—Carol Crosby, Arlene Griffin and Joan Morrison—were busy as stage managers so Mildred could be out in front as the prompter. One year, Dot Bouton handed out rain hoods to the girls in her Sunday School class. That may, or may not, have been the year one of the mothers stepped on a hot footlight bulb with her bare feet. Yikes!

Contests, County Fair Entries and a Radio Show

Baking contests were common at every level of Grange life. Ginger tells about the girls going downstairs to bake their chocolate cakes for one of them. When hers came out of the oven, it fell apart. She was so heartbroken. Gloria recalls a different chocolate cake contest, this one for the adult Grange, but it's worth telling here. Her mother, Audrey, came down with a migraine the day of the contest. Gloria could have baked the cake, but wasn't available. Who should come to the rescue, but her little brothers, Dan and Tim, completely inexperienced in the culinary arts. They proceeded to follow the recipe on the Hershey's Cocoa can to make their first cake. (Shudders.) Their dad, Bob, must have marveled, "Well, *I'll be!*" one too many times. But rather than the cake

being disqualified, the boys were actually awarded first prize, to the consternation of the women favored to win the contest. Clearly a case of beginner's luck!

Mildred encouraged me to enter a muffin baking contest when I was 9. The muffins tasted great but didn't get golden brown, hence no prize. Their "lily-livered" appearance resulted from my mother's oven temperature calibration being 50 degrees off. At the same time, my sister Janet, aged 7, entered an art contest, for which she had to color a rabbit on sandpaper. It was not fun. Every time she thought she was done, someone would tell her it wasn't dark enough. In the end, her little bunny took a red 2nd place ribbon at the Altamont Fair. Good for her!

Kids between the railings: Bottom step 1 to r: Jimmy Moseman, Shirley Maben (tongue out), Bryan Kelly (half hidden) Next step up: Eddie Ballard (with sailor hat), Walter Roberts 3rd step up: Keith Johnson (with brimmed cap), Emerson Kelly, Irving Lerner, Evelyn Moseman 4th step: Gail Kelly (with railing in front of face), Kathleen Bouton, Marilyn Bouton, Collin Kelly, Vivian Salzer 5th step: Ginger Kelly (with booklet around nose & mouth), Linda Streeter, Alice Ballard 6th row: Joanie Morrison, ? (unidentified girl with faint outline of hair and eyes showing), Linda Kelly (with dark glasses), ? (unidentified girl)

Standing in back: (at least one unidentified adult)

Kids to the right of the railing: Ellen Ballard (at bottom with white blouse and glasses), ? (girl behind her with white blouse), and Jane Ballard (half hidden behind both of them)



Marilyn, Linda and Ginger all remember sewing projects. Women brought sewing machines to the Grange Hall for the girls to use. Linda says her clothespin apron won first prize at the county and state fairs before going on to the national level in Denver, Colorado. Very impressive! She still uses that apron.

The Granges and Juvenile Granges put themed displays up each year in the Grange building at the county fair. It was a big deal. One year, the boys made a Road Safety display that took a prize at the Altamont Fair. Another year, Ellen recalls working on a lay-out of a farm. Unfortunately that display did not win a ribbon.

Linda remembers traveling one time with Mildred and another Juvenile Granger to the WGY radio

station where Don Weeks interviewed them on the "Farm Paper of the Air". Of course he asked lots of questions about Juvenile Grange, a secret organization. The girls pretty much kept mum, but when the password came up, 9 year old Linda chimed in with, "I don't think we're supposed to talk about this." Apparently Mildred shot her a look and finished the interview without further input from her charges.

The Startling Dinner Caper -- early 1950's

In addition to paying dues, Juvenile Grangers helped the adult Grange with fundraising and service projects. Cards and wrapping paper were sold door to door each November to benefit the Juvenile Grange. Ham or chicken dinner tickets were sold a few times a year on behalf of the adult Grange. It was good salesmanship experience.

The adult Grange also put on a dinner for other Granges in the county once a year or so. The older girls in Juvenile Grange waited tables. One of these dinners took place after the Grange dining room was refurbished using prize money from winning second place in the nationwide Sears-Roebuck contest for community projects. This dinner was the opportunity to show it off. Arlene says the girls drew straws to see who would have the responsibility of serving the dignitaries at the far table. Sure enough, she drew the short straw. It was *abundantly* impressed upon the girls that the guests must be served first. All went according to plan until the dessert course. Arlene could see plates of desserts on trays in the kitchen, ready for the newest topping on the market, a squirt of whipped cream from an aerosol can. Fearing that one of the other waitresses might get the first tray, she made her way past a line of ladies outside the rest-room by the kitchen to help out. Grabbing a can, she started to garnish her desserts when the unthinkable happened. The confection shot out of the can across the kitchen toward the bathroom and landed on the back of a lady's dress. Arlene says she wished the floor would open up and swallow her!

The Tom Thumb Wedding -- Saturday, March 22, 1955

From time to time, adult members of area Granges would get together for evening programs put on by the host Grange. On one such occasion, the Juvenile Grange was tapped to put on a Tom Thumb Wedding. All of the kids had parts in it. Among the cast of characters were: *Bride* - Betsy Kelly, *Groom* - Billy Johnson, *Maid of Honor* - Kathleen Bouton, *Best Man* - Larry Johnson, *Bridesmaids* - Marilyn Bouton and Joyce Wadler, with Keith Johnson officiating as the *Minister*. The Wedding March was played on a record player and wedding cake was served after the ceremony. Much work preceded this wedding. Emma and her mother-in-law, Neva Johnson, made tuxedos for Billy and Larry out of Earl's military uniforms. Marilyn and Kathleen delighted in trying on strapless blue evening gowns borrowed from Arlene. There were several rehearsals before the big day, which fortunately went off without a hitch (pun intended).

Grand Excursions

Folks recalled going on three big field trips during the decade of the 1950's. Regarding Howe Caverns, Linda mainly recalls taking her first elevator ride. Most Halcott kids had never been in an elevator before, and this descent was a lengthy one. Linda says the elevator scared the pop out of her and she remembers thinking she would have to get back on that thing in order to leave!

There were two trips to the Catskill Game Farm. The more recent one, on Columbus Day of 1958,

was a major undertaking. According to Marilyn's diary, 41 Juvenile Grange and Sunday School kids plus 9 women carpooled to get there. Joyce, along with Joanne and Betty Slavin, rode with the Bouton family. Emma and her boys rode with my family. Larry entertained my sister and I on the long ride with imitations of Donald Duck. According to Marilyn, the group roasted hot dogs, rode the merry-go-round (musical carousel) and then rode "cars that went up and down and around". It was so cold that it snowed after everyone got home that night.

The Hudson River Day Line Cruise (see photos from Joanie Payne and Linda) took place on Sunday, June 28, 1953. Emerson Kelly says one of the borders, affectionately referred to as "Aunt Lee" by the Kelly kids, asked her husband to help arrange it. He piloted one of the boats that circumnavigated Manhattan. According to the *Halcott Catskill Mountain News* correspondent, Katie DeMott, 33 Juvenile Grangers steamed from Poughkeepsie to Catskill and back that day. They returned home by way of Kingston, where they had a picnic at Forsythe Park*. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day from start to finish. [* Source: July 10, 1953 *Catskill Mountain News*]

Conclusion

This has been a taste of what it was like to grow up in the Halcott of yesteryear. Time constraints limited how many people could be interviewed; surely there are more stories out there. Those of us able to work on the article have enjoyed walking down memory lane together. We hope you have been entertained, too.



Blue Afternoon

by Jamie Vogler

On a lovely summer afternoon in July, when rain showers had passed through the valley, leaving behind the fresh scent of petrichor and only a stray drop or two left in the clouds, the members of the *Halcott Fabulous 4-H-ers* gathered in the backyard of Nemo and Julio—dear friends and neighbors, talented artists and proprietors of *Exot Blue Dyers*, as well as editors of this wonderful newsletter. The beautiful gardens, bountiful with veggies and lush flowers, were a-buzz with bright butterflies and bees and zipping hummingbirds. It was the perfect backdrop for our lessons in the magic and science of indigo dyeing.

Julio offered us an informative introductory history lesson on indigo, mainly the art of Shibori, the Japanese method of dyeing patterns by twisting, binding, wrapping, folding, or stitching. He gave us insight into the marvelous properties of the indigo plant—its origins dating back centuries, with the earliest evidence coming from Peru around 4000 BC. India was the first major center of the production of indigo, supplying the Greeks and Romans with the rich, blue fabric. In fact, the word "indigo" derives from the Latin word "Indian".

Lesson over, we got down to the business of learning through experience. What an ABSOLUTE BLAST! Buckets of water and dye, side by side so that one could plunge from one to the other with graceful ease—or, in the case of us novices, make a dribbling mess everywhere. How perfect that the weather cooperated so we could make our mess outdoors!

Julio: Georgia Grocholl



(Left to Right) Jamie Vogler, Aria & Natalia Camillone.



Natalia Camillone

When recalling some highlights from the afternoon—there were so many—one immediately stands out. Obedient students, we anxiously awaited our turn with one of several pairs of elbow-length yellow rubber gloves. Per Julio and Nemo's instruction, it was important if we wanted consistency in the color, that we dip the fabric slowly, without splashing, and that it remain in the dye, completely submerged. Whether it was sheer excitement that it was finally our turn or a complete lapse in judging the dye's height in the bucket compared to the length of our gloves—one by one, we consistently dove the fabric in way too fast, and completely flooded the gloves. You would have thought we would have learned from watching the person that went before us—but no. Almost all of us ended up with matching blue hands, some of us ending up with an arm's length of the blue hue. With a little scrubbing, by the next day the deep blue had been reduce to a faint tint.

The kids were excited to discover a little bit about Carmine/Carminic Acid, a red dye made from a crushed insect, the Cochineal beetle. As they passed around the little glass jar of bright red powder, they learned it was not only good for dyeing fabrics but could also be used as a natural food dye. Fascinating!

Watching everyone laying out their patterns on their fabrics was my personal favorite moment—some of us going in with a plan, some of us letting inspiration guide us as we went along. There was the clamping of fabric, sandwiched between geometric shapes to resist the dye. There were beads fastened with rubber bands to create circles. And there was folding, with origami-like precision—so that the final product resulted in carefully orchestrated rectangles or a beautiful sunflower. Best of all was the laughter and the encouragement that flowed through the group. And then those *oohs* and *ahhs* after we unveiled our masterpieces—that was a really special moment for each of us! It was all a valuable reminder that though stress, time constraints and negative triggers can creep into our daily routines, there are always moments when we can be together, have a laugh, say a kind word, and learn new things—and they can lift our spirits and strengthen our connections.

The clothesline, when everything was hung to dry in the warm sunshine, was a piece of artwork in itself—each piece as unique as the individual who created it. And as an additional fun note, some of the kids entered their beautiful pieces into the Delaware County Fair's (Walton, NY) 4-H exhibition. All the entries placed, with beaming kids bringing home ribbons for their achievements. Grace Grocholl's sunflower shirt was selected to go on to the State Fair in Syracuse, NY—and there it received a blue ribbon at State level!

(Left to Right) Georgia Grocholl, Natalia Camillone, Grace Grocholl, Aria Camillone, and Landon Vogler.



Ribbons *are* wonderful, but I think the highlight for the kids (and those of us who are kids at heart) was the unmatched feeling of being surrounded by positive and supportive energy, having fun and creating something exceptional—friendships, memories, and beautiful and wearable pieces of art that will be treasured for years to come. Nemo and Julio, the *Fabulous 4-H-ers* extend a huge “thank you!” for such an amazing opportunity and such a fabulous afternoon.



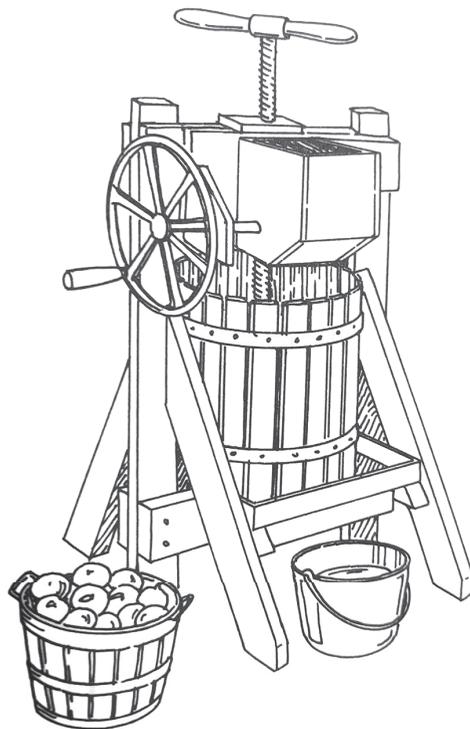
Still Pressing Apple Cider In Halcott

by Sheri Reynolds

October 5th began as a beautiful Fall day in the Catskills. Warren and Sheri Reynolds brought the fruit press down to the back of the house in anticipation of a day spent pressing apple cider with the family. Warren’s daughter, Colleen, her husband Anthony Figiel, their oldest daughter Teddie, the twins Romee and Rocky, and family dog, Finely, arrived ready to help. Nan Reynolds, Scott Moroff and Ida Piperisova, Suzanna Di Bendetto and her daughter Quinn joined in the fun as well. First, we stopped at the pond, where the kids fed the Rainbow Trout—there was lots of jumping and splashing! Then we all headed down to the old apple tree in the barnyard field. This tree had very large red apples on it this year and the kids picked them to add to the apples we already had. And since the press was a motorized machine, next there was a safety briefing.

At this point the history of that machine seems appropriate. Many years ago, the press came as a kit and was assembled by Ward Reynolds, Alan Reynolds and Vic Peet. It originally had a large hand-turned wheel on the side that easily reduced full-sized apples to apple bits. These bits fell into a cotton-sheet-lined wooden slatted cage; this cage filters the apple juice. Once the cage was full, the sheet was folded down and a wooden circle was placed on top. Then the screw was lowered down onto the circle. You kept turning the screw and this exerted pressure onto the apple bits. Apple cider would immediately began pouring out of the bottom and was caught in jars. At some point in the near-past, Michael Di Bendetto replaced the wheel with a motor and belt on the side of the press, making crushing the apples very quick and easy.

Earlier in the week, we’d picked about 6 bushels of apples. We put the apples in a 6 gallon tub full of water. The girls washed the apples and



then handed up small buckets of them to be poured into the hopper. It didn't take very long to fill the cage to the top. The pressure from screw was applied and apple cider started pouring out! The girls drank cup after cup of the sweet sugary liquid, as did all the adults. The girls were great helpers—and Quinn's braids got wet from being dipped in the apple washing water!

Each barrel of apple bits produced about 2 gallons of cider. It was a golden color and very delicious! Lots of apples were eaten. A great day was had by all. We hope to do this again next year.



From Sea To Rising Sea

by Kate Taverna

On inauguration day, 2025, I submitted a grant proposal for a drawing project to *Create Council on the Arts in Catskill* which stated:

“Violence has the potential to just suddenly “erupt”, or seethes beneath the surface of our days. It might be in the back of the minds of the community but it’s definitely on my mind as an artist... I’ve made sculptures of woven steel suggesting armor to protect the vulnerable for decades. This would be a personal investigation into the source of violence in this culture. Is it in our DNA?”

When I saw the scale of the space at the Mountain Top Library, a former church in Tannersville, NY, where the drawings would be exhibited, I felt intimidated and thought that the work would have to be much, much larger than I had originally proposed. A muralist friend suggested lightweight archival Tyvek. It would take big strokes, big gestures, your whole body has to move across the 5’ wide material. Was I up to that task? I had to experiment for a month or two with various primers and drawing materials to see what would stick to this very smooth, silky surface. A month of failures! I was trying out acrylic mediums that were making my hands break out in itchy blisters! No medication would stop its spread. I eventually got the right ointment I christened “the nuke”.

After I was awarded the grant in March, I immediately started researching the history of armor in museums and libraries, gathering an archive of imagery. Meanwhile the country was roiling from decrees undoing decades of civil rights, women’s rights, Medicaid, food security, there were tens of thousands of people out of work, the very structure of government was being wrenched apart, our constitution often brutally re-evaluated. The country was turned on its head. Simultaneously, dangerous flash floods from slow moving storms and cloud rivers were devastating whole areas of the country, leaving people missing, homeless and victimized. Vast forest fires in Canada and California were drifting over the world like an invisible fallout, discoloring our skies, contaminating the air and keeping us indoors. In 2025, climate violence was in manic symmetry with political violence.

Concerned about melting ice and the rising seas, “FLOOD OF ARMS”, shows man-made armaments dwarfed by the scale and uncontrollable force of nature’s giant tsunamis.



Flood Of Arms



Then Spoke The Thundert

Globally, there were, and still are, two wars going on while I worked as well. I was losing sleep over the images of destruction and devastation everywhere. In the spring, I had dreamt of a scene where little tots in diapers crawl into a totally devastated city under darkening skies, a metaphor for a future with uncertain meaning. When I began the drawing, the idea morphed. I added iconography of Washington, DC to surround the devastation top and bottom—I'm not sure exactly why. It was very upsetting to create this juxtaposition and emotionally challenging to keep on working on it for weeks and weeks.

In late summer, the setting sun from a west facing studio window cast a flickering spot of golden light onto the dystopic black and white drawing. The flicker slowly moved across the landscape of the drawing and faded as the sun set. I filmed it with fascination. It seemed like a burning candle. I took it as a sign—so I added a smoldering red hot fire in the craters of the landscape, contrasting the black and white with a surge of fiery color. I was suggesting that something hopeful might emerge from this devastation.

Many thanks to Julio Perea for his energy, willingness and efficiency in hanging these oversized drawings. It would not have been possible for me without him.



We The People



Julio & Kate

May For information about Individual, Arts Education and Community project grants from Create Council of the Arts see: <https://www.createcouncil.org/grants/scr/> which covers Greene, Schoharie, Columbia counties. (Application deadline for this year has already passed.)



Moving

by Craig Wern

I have finally moved to this area after spending 58 years living in NYC, the last 43 years in the same apartment a block from Washington Square Park. I'm not new to the area at all, my parents moved to Margaretville in the mid 70's and ran the Margaretville Department Store for 20 years or so. Of course, I was out of the house by then, but I would visit sporadically. In the mid 90's my long-time partner passed, and shortly thereafter I bought a small stone house in Denver, near Roxbury. At the time I had a full time practice and an office, so I was back and forth for a few years. When my father developed Parkinsons I came up every 2 weeks to help my Mom out. When he passed I came up every 2 weeks to visit with Mom and keep her company. Later, when she could no

longer live alone, she went to Mountainside, where I visited her often. She passed in 2020, perhaps Covid, and I sold my car and rarely visited.

I did, however, come up about once a season to visit and stay with my sister Christl and her husband Tim at the Johnson farm in Halcott where I had my own comfortable space. Christl asked me a few times a year, “So, when are you moving up here?” It never seemed like a possibility until I had gotten to that point when it was either now or never. The last time Chris asked me, I took a long look around the apartment and realized I felt trapped, with too much stuff—and so I asked her just what she meant. Chris promptly told me they would do whatever it took to help me move. And so they did—! With the help of several other family members and Michael DiBenedetto and his giant van, it was all accomplished by the end of September. It’s been a huge change for the better for me to be around caring and supportive family, in the beautiful Catskills. The friendly community folks in Halcott and Fleischmanns have been generous and welcoming—and after 6 weeks I don’t miss NYC anymore.



There’s snow on the ground, it’s bitterly cold,
and the *new* year, sometimes, seems the same as the *old*—
till I lift my guitar, and I pick and I strum,
to discover the music of what is to come.

Let the tick of the clock in the hours of dark
strike, for us all, a single bright spark!
As the old slips away, what’s this singing I hear—?
A fool’s tune, perhaps, for a Happy New Year.



Illustration by Willie Baer

Halcott Bulletin Board

Yes, it's true, *The Times of Halcott* did not manage to get a holiday issue to the printer in time. The articles were for the most part gathered, but, well, life just got too complicated and Julio and I were just too busy. Rather than try to squeeze it through too small a window of time, we decided to hold it back until winter so as not to sacrifice quality to the demands of a regular schedule. I have come to believe that this little local newsletter isn't really something people are waiting for, but rather something that appears one morning in the mailbox like a welcome surprise. And what better moment to dive into or wander through its pages than on a snowy afternoon after the cows have been milked and the plowing or the shoveling or the skiing or the second Bloody Mary are done.

Those snowy afternoons have hit us hard, and often, this year. Our wood pile keeps shrinking, and the persistently frigid temperatures have me dreaming of spring months in advance. Our plant sale last year was a great success, despite

one day of rain—in fact that first rainy Saturday proved to be the busiest part of the whole weekend. Go figure! The new perimeter fence of the garden was almost completed, there's just one stretch left, and inside it friends and neighbors mingled enthusiastically, and were generous with their purchases, all of which help with the continual improvements to the garden. Thank-you all!

There are two new food-stops in town (in Fleischmanns), Ivan's TACO SHACK, and SAN MUL Madelaine's Korean Restaurant. We'll be talking to both Ivan and Madelaine in our next issue, so stay tuned. But in the meantime do stop by for some delicious meals.

And as always, if you have something you want to say, remember you have a place to say it: here, in *The Times of Halcott*. Just email us at: thetimesofhalcott@gmail.com

And have a very Happy New Year. *Nemo & Julio*



SAN MUL

Winter Hours, Sunday 10-3 — Tuesday 2-6
More Info at: eastbranchfarms.com



CATSKILLS TACO SHACK

Thursday - Friday 6-9 — Saturday - Sunday 1-8
To Order Call: 845-254-3287

The Times of Halcott
179 Route 3
Halcott, NY 12430

Winter 2026



9261 · 1581
H E L C O T T
T I M E S