

THE TIMES OF Halcott

A Quarterly Newsletter Volume 20!, Autumn 2002

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*I woke up one morning, and what did I see?
Bright vivid colors on the mountain tops greet-
ing me.*

*Who could have done this? Painted them bright
hues of orange, yellow and red?*

*"It must have been the elves", the old man said.
I could just picture them, one-by-one, painting
the leaves and having so much fun.*

*But then as I blinked, only a moment had passed,
the old man was gone, as if in a flash.*

One of the most beautiful characteristics of living in our little valley, Halcott Center, is the changing of seasons. Since I bought my home four years ago, I have found the transition from one season to the next very exciting. Each Fall I look forward to, with childlike anticipation, the diversity of migrating birds waving goodbye overhead as they pass, as well as a glimpse of an assortment of transitory wildlife going through our area.

Between mid-September to end-October, a bobcat usually finds its way to the top of my garage in the early morning or late evening. I try not to frighten him, as he's a very nervous sort, but enjoy watch-

ing him for a rare few moments. I've tried getting a photo, but usually he's gone before I can get back with a camera.

Then there's the local, male-rogue black bear who comes to pick the last of the berries, apples, and plums growing on my property. He even passes by my bedroom window, which admittedly makes me somewhat nervous. I figured the only way he and I were to get along was to make a deal with him, "Take all the berries, apples, and plums you want, just leave me alone". Well... it's been working so far, and we've never had a problem with each other!



Then there's the wild turkey that come down from the woodlands behind my lawn. They run so fast, that I can never get a picture, even with camera in hand. And two years ago, as I was driving from Fleischmanns to the house, a large hawk took off in front of my Jeep, but couldn't get altitude. WOW! What a great sight! His

wings were as wide as the Jeep, and the delight of getting such a close look is beyond words.



If you recall, four years ago we had a very hot summer, and the rodent population was immense. That was the year a mink moved into my garage. Rodents are the main diet of mink, and I saw numerous minks in the area: mostly by ponds, creeks, or crossing the roads. Then one day, when getting the lawn mower out, Mr. Mink met me with a sneer. Not a very friendly chap, but absolutely beautiful. He stayed until it snowed, and I think he might have left because I threatened to make him into a beautiful pair of gloves!

In addition to my live-in mink the first year of owning my home, I remember saying to myself, "I'll spend the rest of my life raking the leaves with so many trees". To my amazement, I've never had to rake a leaf, because a good gust of wind always carries them away.

In addition to the fantastic wildlife and fauna, the cool crispness in the air is always a delight. The smell of wood-burning stoves, fallen leaves, and looking forward to a good bowl of homemade hot soup or apple pie, all offer a cornucopia of exhilaration and expectation each autumn in Halcott Center. *Mary Bukhari*

WILDLIFE CONCERNS

Our rural nature, this tapestry of hayfield, cornfield, forest and stream, causes us to be suscep-

tible to wildlife and their threats. At the forefront of the season has been the news of the mauling of a 5-month old child in Sullivan County by a black bear. Although officials don't believe the

bear had rabies, the bear's behavior indicated it. But it also matched the descriptions of bear attack behavior a hundred plus years ago, when such attacks were rare, but not unheard of. Reports indicated that bears were most likely to attack small children who did not fight back. Children who resisted, kicking, hitting, and screaming were generally let go. These attacks were usually where houses and their lawns were adjacent to wooded areas, and took place when adult humans were not present. They often followed poor feeding seasons, which resulted in hungry bears looking for food. Are our bears hungry enough to prey on small children? Probably not, although this summer's drought has limited forage foods. And as our homes, lawns, and dumpsters push deeper into the landscape, bears will be more used to humans, and more confrontations are likely to result. The bear biologists doubt if the bear in Sullivan County really knew – or cared – that its prey was human, and the fact that it happened in a more crowded portion of the Catskills may indicate a higher level of stress on the environment there. Are our bears less "stressed"? Probably. Could it happen here?? Rabies is also something to think about



as we enjoy our quiet life in the country. Any mammal is a potential victim or threat; from bats, woodchucks, and skunks, to horses, cows, and cats. A rabid animal may act strangely, be aggressive or friendly towards people or pets, exhibit snarling or whimpering discomfort, or be

otherwise uncharacteristic in behavior.

Some of these signs are also indicative of other wildlife diseases; it is always safest to assume rabies. The New York State DEC wildlife biologists offer the following advice for an encounter with a

possibly rabid animal:

1. STAY AWAY FROM IT! Keep all pets and children away from it.
2. Make sure all your pets are vaccinated. The County Public Health Nurse also needs to be contacted if there has been any possible exposure to the saliva or central nervous tissue of a suspected animal. That office will also advise the public how to deal with and dispose of a rabies-suspected animal, as certain precautions and steps need to be observed.

The phone numbers you need to know:
Greene County Public Health Nurse : 518-943-6591

Stamford NYS DEC Wildlife Office : 607-

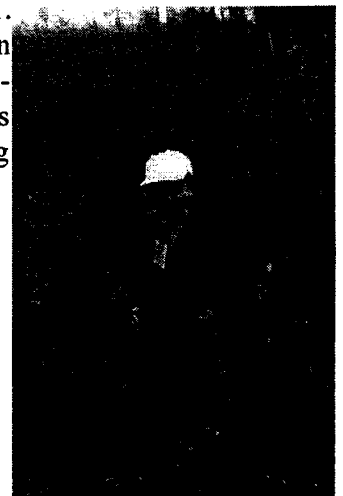
652-7367. PD

SCHOOL DAZE

Autumn is flaming maples, apple pies, wood stove smells, and for kids, back to school. On September 4th, Lindsay Day and Julian Rauter start the long climb from kindergarten to 12th grade at Margaretville Central School. This is a bit of a landmark for all of us as these two youngsters were born just months before the birth of the **Times of Halcott**. I caught up with Julian the other day and we chatted briefly about the upcoming event. We noted how lucky Halcott school kids are (except the Johnsons at the end of the line), living as we do, in a cul-de-sac. The schoolbus roars up the valley every morning, warning all children that it's time to rise and shine, before it actually stops to pick them up on the way back. I have heard the driver delicately honk as it passes some houses. This is a blessing for the occasional oversleeper. Ruth Reynolds told me proudly once that when the alarm had failed, she managed to get all of her kids up, dressed and fed in the time it took the bus to return.

Amazing. Julian will have approximately 12 minutes of this early warning system.

*Julian Rauter
waiting for
the school
bus.*



Samantha Bouton is ready for school. She told me that she'd be going into second grade with her best friend, Tess. Her mom asked her who else was going to be in her class, and Sam said with grown-up impatience that she knew most everyone. Sam was wearing her back-to-school shirt, a wonderful blue that matched Sam's eyes perfectly.

Lucky Ms. McMurray will have three Halcotteers in her third grade, Genesis Quinonez, Kristin Finch and Marshall Bouton. Genesis looked a little alarmed when I asked her what she was looking forward to about school. "I dunno," she muttered. So then I asked her what she liked best about the summer. She smiled, and said, "vacation." *IK*

The Tree Whisperer

Early this spring, my husband Marc and I were fortunate enough to get an inspiring lesson from one of Halcott's natural treasures, Mr. Paul Steinfeld. As you may know, Paul and his wife Lillian are the stewards of the beautiful Gilead Tree Farm at the end of our valley—and it would be an understatement to say that Paul is generous with his tree-care wisdom.

Marc and I decided that, with fathoms of knowledge to absorb, we should start small. For our first tree-surgery attempt, we asked Paul to help us resuscitate a sad apple tree in our front yard that looked as if it had last borne fruit during the Truman administration.

After a fortifying brunch on a crisp April day—for pruning should only be done in the

dormant season "before the sap rises and the buds swell, or after the leaves fall," to quote the master—we trudged out to tend to our patient. We soon realized that much of Paul's gentle wisdom is applicable to much more than trees. At the beginning of his instruction, Paul advised, "Always do anything that alters the tree gradually, then watch what the tree is telling you." Since it would be folly to try to improve on the eloquence and clarity of our teacher's language, I will quote him directly. Herewith, the key points of tree pruning, according to Paul Steinfeld:

- "A lot of care of trees involves anticipating what nature does. For example, most dead branches will eventually fall off themselves, you're just helping nature along."
- "The cambium layer is the outermost layer of the tree, through which the life-blood flows. If you look at the rings of a tree, the outer part is the only portion that



is truly living; fluid conduction is only through the outer layers. Be very careful not to nick or cut the bark on a healthy limb.”

- “To find out if a tree limb is dead—and it’s hard to because trees have amazing recuperative powers—look at the end of the branch, at the small buds and branches to see if they break off easily. Color is also an indicator of what’s growing and what’s not—a reddish-brown branch is alive and growing, gray is not.”

- “Cut out everything that’s dead—the dead stuff is an invitation to decay. Look for places where the bark has peeled off, that indicates dead wood.”

- “When you prune a tree, cut at the angle of new growth, never at a right angle, follow the contour of the tree.”

- “It is best to undercut when you have any weight to the branch, so that when a cut portion falls it doesn’t tear the bark.”

- “We don’t like jagged cuts, we like smooth cuts. Smooth cuts don’t provide an entry for bugs—take a sharp knife and smooth it.”

- “When you’re pruning, be sure to leave some of the smaller branches to draw sap up the branch.”

- “Woodpeckers are actually good for trees—they get the bugs before they can tunnel. Of course, they make tunnels of their own, but they’re not nearly as destructive as thousands of eggs.”

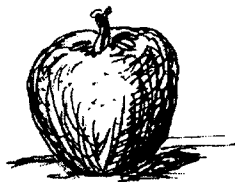
- “If the tree is choking out the sun, you prune to eliminate redundancy. Trees basically need two things—sun and water. You want horizontal growth, not vertical limbs pointed either up or down.”

- I’ve always thought that caring for trees

is therapeutic, not only for the trees, but also for me.”

After a couple of sawing and snipping sessions, our shaggy apple tree again resembled its civilized-orchard brethren. Though this spring’s warm-and-cold snaps severely limited its blossoms, there’s always next year.

“Wait awhile,” Paul often said to us, impatient students, and we’ve indeed recognized the wisdom of marking life in seasons. Paul’s inspiring passion for living things recalls for me Joyce Kilmer’s line, “I think that I shall never see/A poem lovely as a tree.” And Paul certainly creates poetry when articulating his tree-care philosophy.



Soon, the time will again be right for pruning. Help prepare your trees to collect next summer’s sun: a sharp pair of shears and Paul Steinfeld’s wisdom is all that’s needed. Our next lesson: Scion grafting. *Laura Vogel*

A HALLOWEEN HAPPENING

Attention all witches, warlocks, spooks and spectres: There will be a gathering for kids of ALL ages beginning at 3:30 pm, October 31st on Mary Bukhari’s lawn (one house up from and across the road from the Grange/Municipal Building) with games: three legged races, potato sack races, apple dunking. There will be an Apple Pie Baking Contest and an After Dark Haunted Hay Ride (Ghosts and Goblins Wanted). Other activities will include a Séance and a Dance to be held at the Grange. GIFTS WILL BE AWARDED. Call Mary Bukhari (254-4305) to offer help and for further details.

Halcott's Comprehensive Plan



Remember the surveys we filled out? 46% of Halcott residents responded. "This is an incredible rate of return (most mailed surveys have about a 15% return rate) and demonstrates the high level of interest people have in the future of Halcott", said consultant Nan Stolzenburg. Almost everyone who responded feels that the rural character, the area's beauty, and the environment were the most important features of Halcott. Most like the Town just as it is. Lack of a transfer station, noise associated with recreational vehicles, isolation from the rest of Greene County, and roaming dogs were among several issues identified as problems. Over half of the survey participants feel that the minimum lot size should be increased beyond three acres to protect the rural character.

rural, natural beauty and environment were the most important features of the Town. People also liked the friendly neighbors, presence of small family farms, and the Town's location as a destination, rather than a thoroughfare.

Forty-seven different ideas were generated at the workshops on how these positive features can be maintained. Some of the negative features identified at the workshops included lack of a transfer station, speeding on town roads, lack of services from Greene County, trespassing, ATV's on roads, and unsupervised dogs. The results are very close to those of the written survey. Forty ideas on how to improve these negative situations were offered.



*Visioning Session for
Comprehensive Plan*

Forty-one people attended the planning workshops in June. Like the survey, workshop participants clearly indicated that the

Participants at the workshops were asked to answer questions about what land uses

should be controlled or encouraged in Town. People were in favor of encouraging historic preservation, but most (over 90%) did not want to see the town encourage new land use activities such as commercial development, condominiums, billboards and signs, casinos, airports or mobile homes. Over 90% of participants indicated that they would want to see the Town control or regulate these uses.

Residents were asked at the workshops what they want for the future of Halcott. Some common themes were that Halcott should continue to have one major road, no industry, improved schools and municipal services, maintain its beauty and rural character, have a clean environment and a strong sense of tranquility. As a result of the workshops, the Comprehensive Plan Committee drafted the following vision statement for Halcott.

“In the future, our natural beauty and secluded, rural character remain the most prominent features of Halcott. The landscape is a mix of undeveloped open and forested land, thriving farms, and low-density rural residences that are consistent with Halcott’s traditional character. Clean air and water, unobstructed views of the mountains, and an abundant wildlife community exist throughout the town. Agriculture is actively encouraged and sustained locally in a non-polluting manner. Sensible land use regulations control new uses and encourage low impact development that meet the needs of the community, enhances quality of life, and preserves the character and environment of our town. Halcott has a strong sense of

community where people are friendly, tolerant, considerate, and welcoming, and where there is a high degree of cooperation and communication between citizens and the local government. Quality public services will include road maintenance, emergency services, recreational and cultural activities, solid waste management, and schools. The Grange Hall remains the central focus for activities in town.”

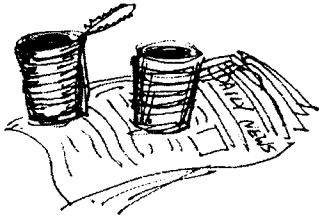
Nan Stolzenberg

ATV Committee

During the development of a Comprehensive Plan for Halcott, many people have complained about ATVs (All Terrain Vehicles) in the Town – both their abuse and the restrictions on their use. In an effort to meet these concerns, the Town Board has voted to create a committee of citizens to study the problem. Tim Johnson, Kane DiBenedetto, Bill and Craig Westerfeld, Jackie VanValkenburgh, Lee Austin, Tom Maglaras, and Dennis Bouton have been asked to draw up a list of possible actions that the Town could take to allow regulated ATV traffic in parts of Halcott while respecting the rights of all town members. Working together, we hope to be able to maximize the entertainment of ATV driving, while keeping our valley safe and enjoyable for others. Any suggestions about how we can achieve this goal are very welcome.

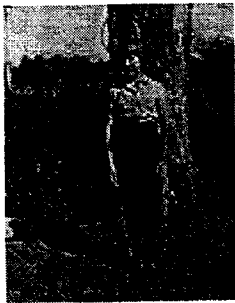


Recycling: A Privilege



Did you ever wonder what happens to recyclables after you leave them at the Town Highway Department?

Russell Bouton and Greg Finch must sort through everything and lately, everything has meant a lot more than just recyclables. People have been leaving containers with the food still in them, real garbage and even small appliances like blenders, lawn mowers and grills! Please help us do a better job. The Town can only accept bundled or paper-bagged newsprint, tied magazines, plastics, glass, and tin cans. Hours are spent trying to dispose of our mess, time that could be better spent on caring for the roads. If you're not sure about what to deposit, please ask the Highway Department beforehand; they would be happy to answer any questions at 254-5736.



Does anyone know this young lady cowgirl?

The Grange building continues to receive needed attention. You may have noticed the new paint job and repairs done on the exterior. As we go to press, Kerns Nursery will be planting 10 trees and several shrubs around the building. Have you seen the flagpole paid for by contributions from the different contractors who have worked on the building and installed by Karl VonHassel? Dave Nissen, our electrician, has wired a photo-sensitive light to shine on our flag at night.

Inside, changes are occurring as well. Our Town Justice already holds court in the small office that has been outfitted with new furniture. Soon the Town Clerk will have hours there as well. And downstairs? Over sixty people have donated to the Community Fund's Grange kitchen drive, raising over \$2500. The wonderful O'Connor Foundation has given us a \$15,000 matching grant for the kitchen as well. Many, many unsung heroes have contributed and continue to contribute hours of hard work to this project. In the end, we will have a community building that proudly reflects the warm, welcoming hospitality of Town of Halcott. *IK*

PASSAGES

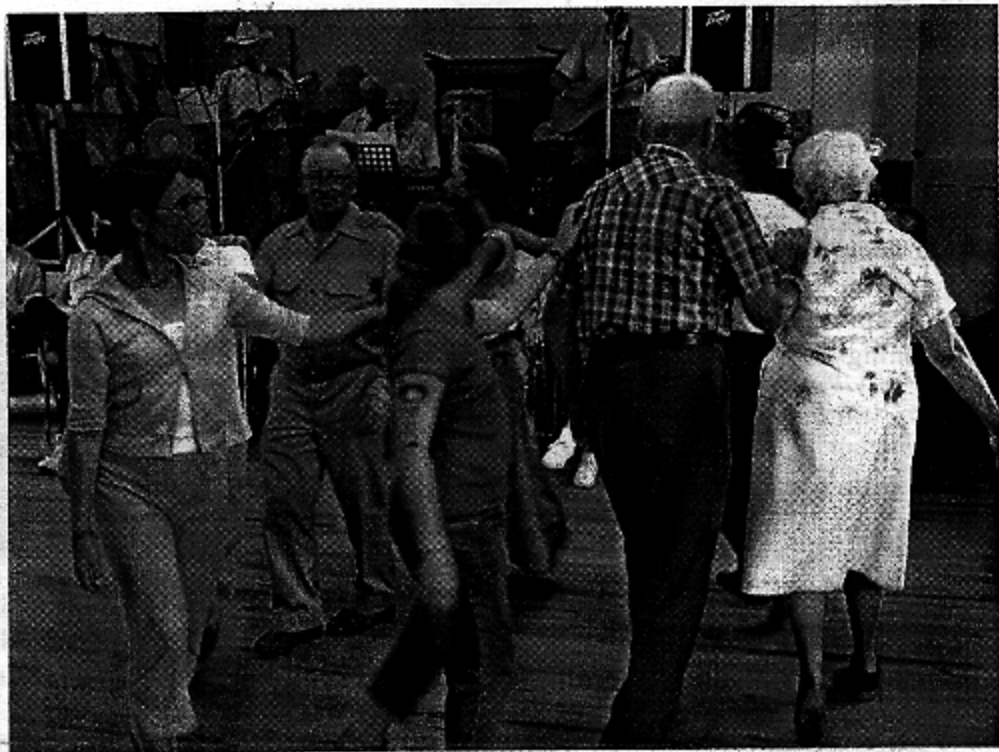
Congratulations to Mark and Jamie Bouton Vogler who married on August 3rd on the Bouton fields. The ceremony was lovingly performed by Ralph Darmstadt, blessed by a Seneca Indian, and flown over by a pair of great blue herons.

According to the book *Animal-Wise* by Ted Andrews, the appearance of these birds indicates that "we know what is best for us," that "now we can stand on our own," and that it is a reminder for us to "follow our own path in life;" highly appropriate at the beginning of a marriage! PD



Halcott Fair, July 27, 2002





*Square Dancing and Shadow
Playing at the Halcott Fair. The
pictures on these two pages were
taken by Lester Pfeffer. We thank
him for letting us use his work!*





THE TIMES OF THE HALCOTT METHODIST CHURCH

VOLUME I, AUTUMN, 2002

more by requesting a copy of the church history or by visiting our website at <http://www.freeyellow.com/members7/church49/index.html> (The church and town websites are also linked to one another.)

An important part of our ministry is prayers of joy and concern for others. These are often accompanied by appropriate greeting cards. We hope you will continue to share celebrations and needs with us as we extend this ministry to a widening circle of neighbors. One of our great joys this summer was the safe return of many travelers. A young mother assisting some of our lost travelers in a distant city protested their words of thanks by saying "But it was a blessing to help you!" When was the last time you heard that response after you inconvenienced someone?

Fall Calendar

Sundays, September 8 and 15 from 10:15 to noon: Sunday School observed **Grandparents Day** by visiting older or

Until recently, news of the Halcott United Methodist Church was published within a parishwide newsletter, which has been discontinued. We are delighted to be invited to add a column to the Times of Halcott. In time, we hope to share from a wealth of stories collected across almost 175 years in addition to news of upcoming events and other features. But for new readers, an introduction seems to be in order. Founded in 1829 and built in 1849, the Halcott UMC is currently pastored by Charles Gockel, who resides with his growing family in Roxbury, NY. As the only church in town, we make a conscious effort to welcome visitors of all backgrounds and have become the "church away from home" for many folks through the years. Worship service is held at 9:00am year round and Sunday School is at 10:30am during the school year. Whether you are in Halcott full-time or part-time, long-term or short-term, please consider yourself invited to come worship with us. You can learn
(ive) **Interfaith Thanksgiving Service for**

shut-in neighbors with home-baked goodies.
Sunday, September 22: Sunday School classes resume at Church at 10:30 am.

Twice monthly at 7:30pm: **Interfaith Old Testament Bible Study**, currently the Book of Ezra. For information call Ruth Kelder (254-5589) or Paul and Lillian Steinfeld (254-5031).

Thursday nights at 7:00pm: **Men's New Testament Bible Study**. For information, call Pastor Charlie (607-326-9366) or Michael DiBenedetto (254-4492 or 254-6508).

First Sunday evening of each month: the five parish churches take turns hosting special worship or fellowship events. Halcott UMC invites the community to an **Old Fashioned Apple Pie & Hymn Sing** on November 3 at 7:00pm.

Tuesday, November 5, beginning at 10:00am at the Grange Hall: **Election Day Bakesale** continues until sold out.

Sunday, November 24 at 7:00pm: (tenta-

the greater Margaretville area (location to be announced), in celebration of our national holiday of faith.

Sunday November 24 at 12:30pm: Covered dish luncheon at Margaretville UMC followed by the annual **Parish Conference** with District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Mark Chatteron.

Saturday, December 7 at 7:30pm. At the Grange Hall, the century-old **Community Christmas Program** presented by children and adults from the surrounding community. Local musicians, the Sunday School and the Grange take part and Santa pays a visit. There is no admission charge. If you have never attended, you will be surprised at how well Halcott can entertain. For more information, *please call Pattie Kelder (254-5589) or Jennifer Bouton (254-4144).*

Sunday, December 22 at 7:30pm at the Church: **Christmas Candlelight Service** - readings from Scripture interspersed with special music, a traditional and beautiful celebration of Jesus' birth.