

The Rensselaerville Press

📖 A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE RENSSELAERVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 📖

"Today is Tomorrow's History"

Spring 2021

A Memory of 9-11

On September 11th it will be 20 years since our country was attacked by foreign enemies and the twin towers in Manhattan fell. All of us older than 25 remember that day clearly and how it impacted our lives, both immediately and forever. This winter the RHS received this letter with a generous check in Janet Haseley's memory. The letter reminded us of how Janet frequently opened her home to strangers, but also the reality of 9/11. RHS will dedicate part of its newsletter this summer to reflections from our membership on where you were or the impact of 9/11. Would you send a short memory from that day or time to Rensselaervillehistoricalsoc@gmail.com? Thank you.

Rose Kuhar

12/26/2020

Dear Rensselaerville Historical Society,

I have traced my Aley ancestors back to John Aley of Rensselaerville. Years ago, I decided I should go there and see what I could find. I believe I emailed RHS and Janet [Haseley] replied and we talked and she offered to put me up in her wonderful house. I had made plans to fly into Albany early in the morning, maybe figure out Albany records, and then drive to Rensselaerville. The Southwest flight was cheap and on Tuesday and I got the ticket. I later realized it was my wife's birthday but she said go ahead . . . So I did. It was a beautiful morning on Sept. 11, 2001. I was coming down the ramp at the airport to go to my rental counter and I saw a couple of people looking at TV's and could see a plane in a building. I pulled out my cell phone and called home and left a message that I made it safe, not sure what was going on. That was the last call I could make for hours. Rented my car, found NPR and was in shock listening to the reports; driving around Albany not knowing what to do. Finally made it to Rensselaerville and Janet and Ed were most gracious. I spent most of the day in my room. I did go to the RHS and look around. Most everything was closed for several days so there was not much I could do. Finally I realized that I couldn't fly home and I could drive back to DC with the rental car. I made a stop in Big Indian, NY to visit an Aley cousin I had never met before. I was following the path of my ancestors.

Although most of my stay in Rensselaerville is a blur, Janet and Ed [Haseley] were so nice to offer their home, then put up with me in such a strange time, I am so grateful.

Tim Aley
Gaithersburg, MD
Life Member of RHS
Reprinted with Tim Aley's permission. Thank you!

Rose Kuhar

**“The truth is incontrovertible;
malice may attack it,
ignorance may deride it,
but in the end, there it is.”**

WINSTON CHURCHILL

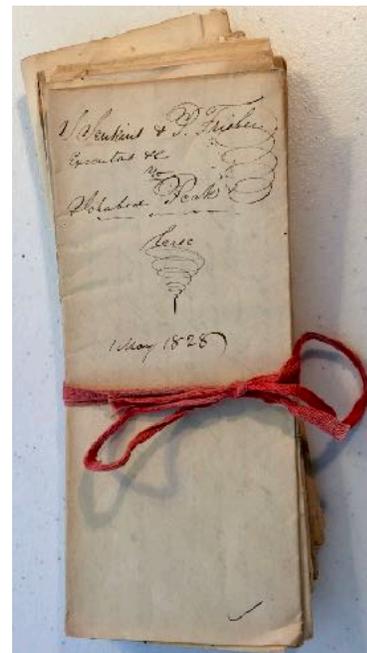


Jonathan Jenkins

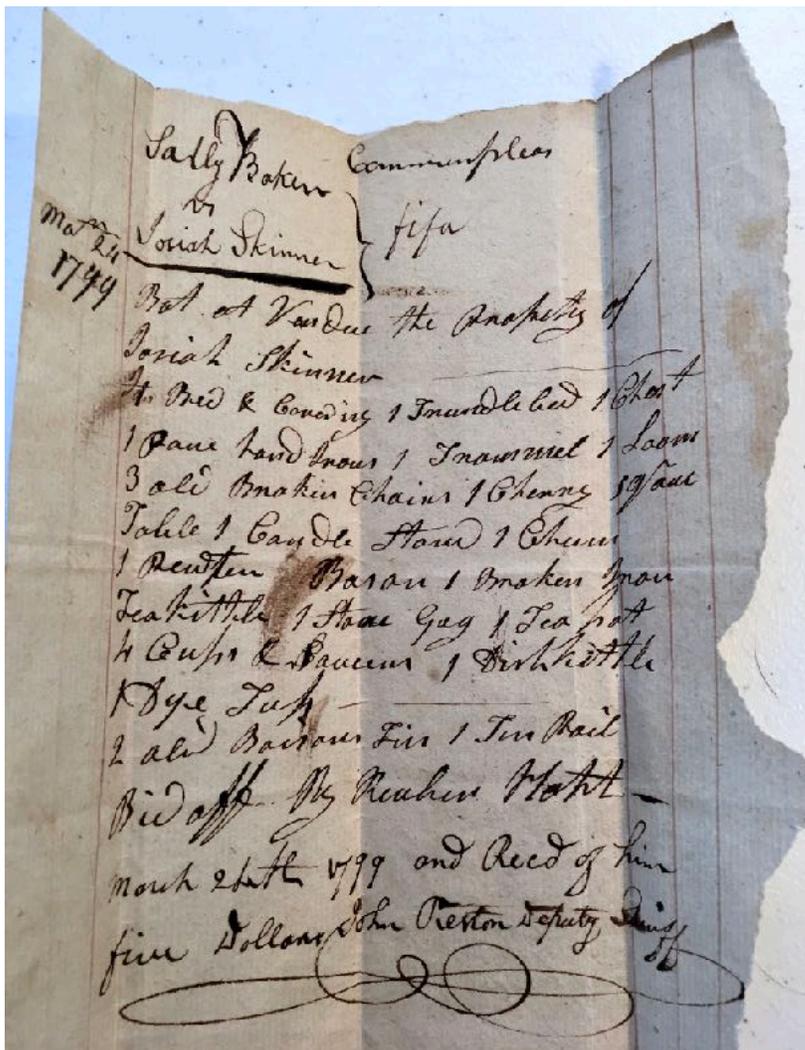
Sometime in the year 2019 I took it upon myself to take a cardboard box of legal documents from the Grist Mill’s Historical Society room that had come from the law office of Jonathan Jenkins, born in 1776. The box was marked, “Legal Papers of Jonathan Jenkins, Property of Bertha Jenkins Keller, Rensselaerville, New York”. I wanted to see if I could figure out exactly what these legal papers were.

My grandmother was a Jenkins. Jonathan was my great, great, great grandfather. My cousin was Dorothea Martin and her mother was Bertha Wood Jenkins Keller. Bertha’s parents were Mulford and Emma L. Mather Jenkins. Jonathan was married to Elizabeth Mulford.

In those days they wrote all legal papers in ink, by hand, and that is what this collection is. I can’t always read the beautiful cursive script and I also didn’t always understand the legality of a lot of these documents. But when I started to review these



documents I was enthralled! I was touching paper (in those days made from rags) that was over 200 years old! I even did some research on how paper was made in those days as I was so impressed with the condition the actual paper was in. Opening each packet was addictive. I hadn’t even finished my own genealogy work but I couldn’t resist reviewing all these papers. I kept them in the method that I received them which was in bunches tied with string. There is a list that I wrote from the cards that were attached to each pile showing that someone had reviewed these papers in the past. I could not tell when that was done. There were receipts, wills, leases of monies paid for rent to Stephen Van Rensselaer III from the tenants of his lands, Notes and Bonds, and letters from clients, etcetera. One of the documents was a receipt for monies paid for a slave and her children, which was very upsetting to read. I am sharing this document with you.



I put them in (supposedly) archival sleeves but maybe the sleeves should be removed after conferring with a few experts in Albany as I have been told that a cardboard box is okay to store them

Continued on page 3

The Truth... *Continued from Page 2*

in. The fact really amazed me but it is exactly what was told to our librarian in Middleburgh after the 2011 flood by the “experts” in Albany. The summer of 2020 I returned all of the documents to the Rensselaerville Historical Society’s research room.

Diane Santus
Volunteer and RHS member



*The Home of Apollos Moore
Photo by Rose Kuhar*

1807

“Know all men by these presents that I Stephen Haines of the town of Coeymans & County of Albany for & in consideration of the sum of one hundred fifty Dollars to me in hand paid by Apollos Moore, Esq. of the town of Rensselaer Ville a Negro wench by the name of Nan or Nance aged twenty one or twenty two for & during the term of Nine years from the fourth of July last past at the expiration of which the said Nan or Nance is to be manumitted [set free] by the said Apollos & also I do sell unto Apollos the two Negro male Children of the said Nan or Nance agreeable & conformable to an act of the Legislature of the state of New York entitled an act concerning Slaves & Servants payed April eighth one thousand eight hundred & one & agreeable to the amendment or amendments to the same The oldest of which said Negro Children named Cyrus was born December sixteenth one thousand eight hundred four the other named Jim born the tenth day of July in the present year & the copy of this bill of Sale I have left on file in the clerk’s office of the town of Coeymans. I witness whereof I hereunto set my hand & seal this first—day of August one thousand eight hundred & seven.
Sealed and delivered
Stephen Haines in presence of Amos Jones and Joseph Moore
Amos Jones Joseph Moore”

**The 6th Rensselaerville Historical Society Art Show
At the Historic Grist Mill, Main Street Rensselaerville
Artists, Sign Up Now**

Open to all artists who have lived or live in the Town of Rensselaerville or are members of the Rensselaerville Historical Society. Both amateurs and professionals are welcome. RHS has an emerging artist category for young people under age 21.

Dates: July 16-25, 2021

Limited Space – Sign up now! Our show highlights a wide variety of media. In the past we have had paintings, wood carvings, large and small sculptures, drawings, photographs, quilts, and more. If you are signing up to display a piece created by a deceased artist, please indicate this on the form. From one to five pieces may be submitted, depending on their size and the number of participants. There is a \$10 registration fee to sign up; this helps the RHS with expenses. Emerging youth artists have no registration fee. Please fill out the form and email it to us at rensselaervillehistoricalsoc@gmail.com or mail it to RHS, PO Box 8, Rensselaerville, New York 12147. Send an email with any questions.

Name of Artist _____

Your name if submitting a deceased artist’s piece _____

Mailing Address _____

Email Address _____

Landline or _____ Cell Phone _____

Can we text you? Yes No Type of Media _____

Number of Pieces _____ Are you an RHS member? Yes No

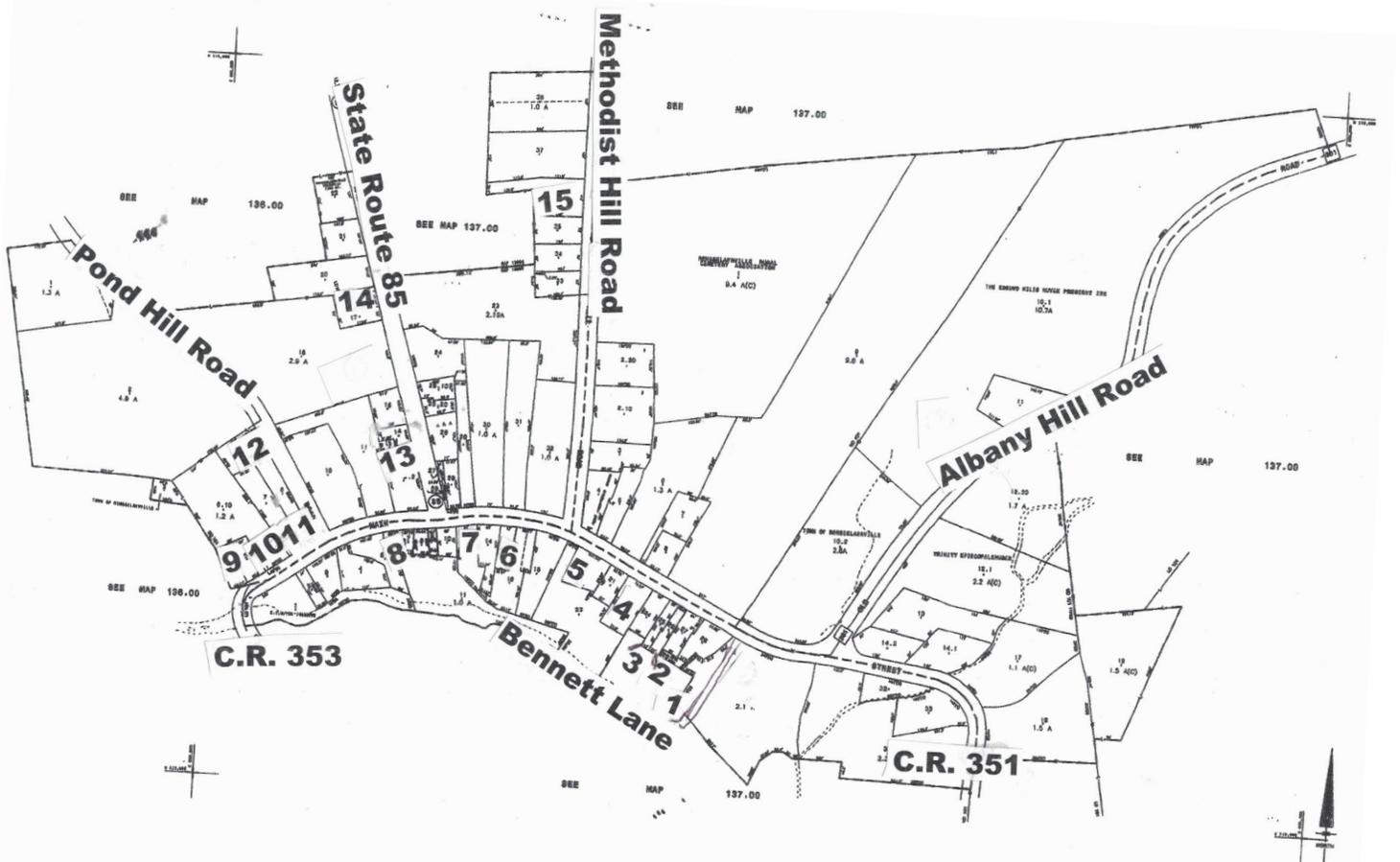
Historic Homes Welcome New Owners

In 1788 Stephen Van Rensselaer III had William Cockburn survey the south western corner of his land. He owned 24 miles on both sides of the Hudson River. Cockburn broke up what was to become the Township of Rensselaerville, western Westerlo, Berne and Knox into 160 acres lots and numbered them. The Town of Rensselaerville still uses these lot numbers on the tax map. The hamlet of Rensselaerville is located in what is known as the Great lot 249. During the last few years the village has had a turnover as older residents have moved away or died. Several buildings have been vacant for years. Then the pandemic hit and with the economy in a free fall an unusual phenomenon happened in Rensselaerville. Fifteen houses have been sold in 2020 and early 2021. There are still six more buildings looking for new owners and hopefully will have closings this year. The 15 houses that have new owners this year are some of the oldest in the village. Please refer to the map for the house locations. Below is a glimpse of the houses histories.

1. Original tenant house for Jonathan Jenkins's Farm.
2. In the 1830s Wheeler Watson broke up his apple orchard into many building lots. In 1832 he sold this property to Samuel Vesty; 1859 Sheriff Sale it went to the highest bid of \$501 to Asa Palmer. The original house was twice as long but the back half was removed and moved. It has always been a private residence.
3. The second of two lots Wheeler Watson sold to Samuel Vesty in 1832. The house was moved from near the creek to the empty lot. Number 2 & 3 were on Wheeler Watson's apple orchard.
4. On the 1820 map this is the only house on Wheeler Watson's lot. In 1839 it may have been the home of John T. Conklin.
5. In 1832 this house was the location of the "First Select School" open under the supervision of the Reverend Marcus Miller and the school was located in an upper room.



#2 & #3



Historic Homes... *Continued from Page 4*

6. Formerly known as the John Frisbee's potash and store lot, in 1832 James Jarvis' Saddle Shop was located here and at one time it was the John B. Crouse shop and Tompkins' Store.
7. By 1817 this house was owned by Dwyer Cleveland. At some point, the right side of the house held a harness shop. In 1932 William and Cora Britton started a fruit and vegetable store and an ice cream parlor here.
8. The map of 1820 has this area labeled as Rufus Watson's Blacksmith Shop but in 1825 Luther Spencer sells it to Elias Dayton as a store. In 1829 William Holdridge had a cabinet shop here. Philip Fritch Junior and Senior were furniture and casket makers plus undertakers starting in 1860. The business was on the second floor. In 1934 William and Cora Britton moved their fruit and vegetable store plus ice cream parlor into this building until WWII then it became just a confectionary store. William Britton was the postmaster from 1945-1950. His son, Ralph took over the store and became the postmaster and he put in a soda fountain.
9. Built about 1790 by John H. Frisbee and was the Frisbee and Rhodes store or trading post. In the early 1800s a cobbler shop was located on the second floor. It is probably the oldest house in the village. The house is made out of timbers with pin joints and the beams are pegged at the corners.
10. This house is known as the Middle Cottage. This was the second framed house Samuel Jenkins built and it was called the Foster House. Samuel moved to his son, Jonathan Jenkins' house about 1812.
11. This building was built between 1799 & 1803 by Captain Asa Colvard as an Inn. In 1920 it belonged to the Methodist Home for Children of Buffalo where it became in disrepair. It was renovated in 1924 and in 1949 Mills Ten Eyck bought it as a summer home.
12. In 1838 this was the house lot of Gurdon and David Conklin — by the 1854 and 1866 map it belonged to Widow Bryant.
13. The property where the Catalpa House stands is part of a parcel of 1,000 acres originally purchased by Rueben Frisbee. He built a small house on the corner of the property. This house was moved across the plank road. Franklin Frisbee erected the present house in 1806. A store and tavern, a doctor's and justice office, the Federal library, a ballroom, a Free Masons' Lodge and the family accommodations were in this building. Under the ownership of Edith Lounsbury and Dr. Tweed the building was given the name "The Catalpa House" and in 1922 it became a boarding house with a few guests. The Catalpa House continued to serve meals and house guests until the early 1970s. Since that time it has been a restaurant, B & B and private home.
14. In 1820 this lot was the site of John Niles's Bark House and tannery; in 1832 this house was built on the tannery site. The home has had many owners but was always a residence.
15. The 1854 map shows a house located on this site. From 1820-1832 this was the location of the Methodist Meeting House.

To follow the line of ownership for buildings built in the early 1800s is a real challenge. It takes hours of tracking down clues and reading old deeds. Many times it changes ownership several times in a ten year period. Hopefully in the future the Historical Society can do research on the buildings of the other hamlets so the history of the township can be unraveled.



#6



#7 Photo by Bud Rivenburgh



#8



#9



#10



#13

Revolutionary War Soldiers Who Settled in Rensselaerville

Revolutionary War soldiers and patriots certainly were not born in Rensselaerville but braved the wilderness to settle here. They brought their families from the New England states and the lower Hudson Valley of New York. The Rensselaerville Historical Society has so far been able to identify 63 soldiers who made their homes in our town at some time. Information about these soldiers has come from several sources and it is an ongoing project. The following information may be inaccurate so any information members have on these soldiers would be appreciated. The RHS is looking for other Revolutionary War soldiers who settled here. If you know of anyone to add to our database, please let us know.

Dan Abijah – Buried in Preston Hollow Cemetery – no other information.

Nelson Abrams – Buried in Medusa – no other information.

Francis Becraft – He enlisted in 1778 and served under Captain William Dietz in Colonel Peter Vrooman's Regiment. The company was stationed at Weidman's Fort at a place called Beaver Dam (Berne) about 10-12 miles from the lower fort in Schoharie. He served as a guard and did scouting – Spring-November 1779 - 1782.

Amos Beecher – He enlisted in Connecticut when the first call for troops went out and rose to the rank of captain, commanding the 15th Regiment in 1778. He was discharged on December 6, 1780 and died in Rensselaerville in 1816.

George Benn Sr. – While George Benn was visiting England at the age of 16, King George put out an order to seize any able-bodied German male who spoke English. George found himself on a troop ship commanded by General John Burgoyne bound for Canada. He was made a body servant to General Burgoyne and was at the Battle of Saratoga when he escaped from the British. He joined the American side where he was a private on the roll of Colonel Robert Van Rensselaer's 8th Regiment of the Albany County, NY Militia.

Orrin Burnhan – He fought at Bunker Hill, on Long Island and in New Jersey. He was born in Connecticut and died in Rensselaerville in 1832.

Warren Barnes – He joined in March 1781 as a private at Colchester, Connecticut under Captain Ransom in Colonel Hazlet's Regiment. He was discharged in January 1782.

Eliakam Barnum – He was a private in the Dutchess County, New York Militia.

Albert Bell – no information.

Joseph Birchard (Burchard) – He served with a Connecticut unit in Captain Gilbert's Company, Colonel John Mead's Regiment. He died on April 23, 1813 and is buried in the Preston Hollow Cemetery.

Shubel Bouton – Enlisted and was a private despite being a Quaker.

Joseph Butler – Buried in Medusa, no stone.

William Campbell – Buried in Rensselaerville.

Rueben Cartwright – No information.

Henry Cline – He joined on June 1, 1775 as a private. He served in Captain Peter Van Rensselaer's Company of Colonel Van Dyke's Regiment, part of the time at Lake George. In the spring of 1776, he served a month in Captain Abraham Fonda's Company in Colonel Livingston's Regiment. He was a guard at Half Moon where he was in the campaign against General Burgoyne's army and was present at his surrender. In 1778 he served with Colonel Willet's Regiment and was stationed at Fort Herkimer. He is buried in the Medusa Cemetery.

Asa Colvard – He was a captain.

Daniel Conkling – He served from 1775-1785 and is buried in the Rensselaerville Cemetery.

William T. Conkling – No information.

Henry Couchman – In April 1775 he enlisted at Newton, MA and served as a private under Captain Cook's Company of Colonel Gardner's Massachusetts Regiment. He served under Deputy Commissary General Avery until after Burgoyne's surrender and then was attached to the clothier's department under George Mason. He is buried in Preston Hollow.

Continued on page 7



Revolutionary War Soldiers... *Continued from Page 6*

Jonathan Crocker – He was a private in the 7th Regiment, Dutchess County, N.Y. Militia.

John Crosby – He was a private in Field's Company, 3rd Dutchess Regiment, N.Y. Militia.

Joel Culver – He joined the 9th Regiment, Albany, New York.

Nathan Dayton – He enlisted in March or April, 1776 as a private in Captain John Davis's Company, Colonel Henry B. Livingston's Regiment, New York Militia. He served nine months and drew a war pension. He is buried in the old section of the Rensselaerville Cemetery.

John La Mater – He may have paid \$1,000 to the government so he could serve because he was too old for service.

Allen Duran – No information.

John Edwards – Major

Abel Ford – In 1776 he enlisted at Canaan, Columbia County, NY and was in Captain Ebenezer Benjamin's Company, which went to Fort Edward and then marched to Johnstown. He continued to serve under five different companies, serving from one to six months, being discharged then re-volunteering when called to service. In the fall of 1777 he was sent to Bemis Heights where British General Burgoyne was poised to attack and he saw action. He went to Cherry Valley while under Captain Davis's command. Under Captain James Phelps's Company he was a guard at a place between Kinderhook and Albany.

Edward Foster – No information.

Benjamin Frisbee – He served under Captain Augustus Odell in Lieutenant Colonel Van Rensselaer's Company in Albany County Regiment, 4th Rensselaerwyck Battalion, December 4, 1781.

Henry Gifford – No information.

John Hagadorn – He served in Captain Jacob John Lansing's Company, Colonel Morris Graham's 63rd NY Regiment. Source: Colonial History - State of N.Y. State Archives Vol 1, page 386.

Deacon James Holmes – Holmes enlisted as a private in Captain Benjamin Mills's Company on the 20th of June 1776 at Salisbury, CT. They marched across the river to Fort Washington where he was taken prisoner when the British overtook the fort. He was marched as a prisoner to Harlem and then to New York City where he was held in a church for the time of his imprisonment. He remained there until he was taken sick with smallpox and hospitalized in New York, then was boarded in a private house. He was paroled, discharged and returned home in February 1777. He re-entered service under Colonel Burrel's Regiment in October in the same year.

Will be continued in the next issue

Rose Kuhar



Changes to Fiscal and Membership Years Need Updated Postal and Email Addresses



At the RHS annual meeting in September, it was voted to change the fiscal year and membership year from July-June to the calendar year January-December. This change will make it easier for the treasurer and membership secretary to keep their records updated. It will take awhile for memberships to catch up with the change. If you paid your membership last fall or in December your membership will roll over into 2021. The membership secretary will be working on revamping the membership list and if you are able to renew your membership now it will be appreciated.

Last year was a transitional year for our newsletter. The RHS is now sending the newsletter digitally. The pandemic, unreliable postal service and cost all contributed to this change. Many of our **Life Members** have not updated their email addresses. If you are not receiving the newsletter digitally or have changed your email address, please send your new email address to rensselaervillehistoricalsoc@gmail.com. Many of our mailed newsletters are being returned; if you move or you change your mailing address, please also share it with the RHS. We will continue to mail paper copies to members without email addresses or to those who prefer a paper copy (please let us know). If you like to save the newsletter, please print it since photos will be in color.

We need updated postal and/or email addresses for these Life Members. Can you help?

Phyllis Bertin – Medusa

Hugh M. Flick – Connecticut

Potter Palmer – Illinois

Date: _____

Name: _____

Street or PO Box: _____

Town, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Alternate Mailing Address and when to use this if you are a "seasonal" resident (the post office will not forward our newsletter or other third class mail): _____

Name: _____

Street or PO Box: _____

Town, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Membership (new or renewal)

Check off what you are sending

- Individual Membership \$10.00
- Family Membership 15.00
- Sponsorship Membership 30.00
- Life Membership 150.00
- Donation to Paint the Mill ____.
- Other Donation ____.
- Gift Membership ____.
- TOTAL: ____.

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