



Newsletter

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Volume 12, Number 3

Fall 2014

SHAWANGUNK FARM BOYS AND THE CIVIL WAR, PART II

In Part I we learned that, in the North, the Civil War was largely fought by volunteers. Draftees, if they had money, could buy substitutes to take their place. This essay will focus on men from our own Shawangunk who served in the New York 156th Regiment.

The first recruits sailed from Rhinecliff in 1862, down the Hudson river on a steamer to Riker's island, before continuing on to New Orleans by way of the Atlantic Ocean. They were shipwrecked en route – not an auspicious beginning! Fortunately, they were picked up by a U.S. man-of-war without loss of life.

Thirty thousand Union soldiers had massed in New Orleans to hold the city and nearby regions, most of them untrained and led by amateurs. In late December, the 156th joined General Sherman's 2nd Division to begin training. They fought first at Port Hudson late spring 1863, with Union troops attempting to take the Mississippi river town in coordination with Gen. U.S. Grant's offensive against Vicksburg to the north. The Confederates withstood the assaults but surrendered after hearing of the fall of Vicksburg. This victory opened the Mississippi River for the North down to New Orleans. Four thousand Union soldiers died at Port Hudson, including 30 casualties in the 156th Regiment, many from malaria that spread in the ranks.

In early 1864 the 156th marched north 175 miles to join the Union Army under General Grant, first in Alexandria, Louisiana and then as he successfully defended Washington from the Confederacy. Grant then appointed General Sheridan to head an Army of the Shenandoah which included the 156th Regiment. Under Sheridan's command, the soldiers burned mills and iron furnaces, and systematically burned crops as they marched through Virginia. The 156th played a part in this destruction and Ulster farm boys felt remorse as they set fire to barns and destroyed grain. No homes were destroyed, but the Shenandoah Valley could no longer feed an army.

The hardest fighting and the greatest losses for the 156th took place during this period. In September 1864, 111 Shawangunk farm boys died in the battle of Opequon in Winchester, Virginia against veterans of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. This battle was followed by the Battle of Cedar Creek in Virginia, and again casualties for the 156th were high. Sheridan's victory, however, effectively ended the Confederate invasion of the North. The 156th was next sent to North Carolina in April and became part of the army ending resistance in that state. On April 12, Lee surrendered at Appomattox. On October 23, 1865, the 156th mustered out and returned home by sea or on their own over land. They had suffered an estimated 269 casualties.

Many Shawangunk families were badly affected. Five sons of the Scott family served but only one survived the war intact; two died of chronic diarrhea in South Carolina; two others were discharged with disabilities. Three of four sons of Alexander and Mary Henry in Pine Bush survived, including William whose bounty was paid by the town of Pine Bush; but the fourth, discharged with disability, died at home of consumption. George Conklin of Shawangunk, a prisoner of war at Andersonville, was assumed to have starved to death in 1863. For the 156th New York Regiment, far more young men were lost to disease (167) than to injury and death on the battlefield (60). The Union cause was won, but the cost in disrupted or shortened lives for both sides was grievous. An estimated 750,000 men lost their lives in the War Between the States, more than 2% of the population.

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Elias G. McCord, the grandfather of Gilbert McCord of Pine Bush, volunteered for the 156th Regiment in 1862 and served three years. Wounded in battle and also hospitalized during his service, he survived the war. In a poignant letter to his mother, he wrote:

(Continued, p.2)

"Well, I have not much news to tell other than we have left New Orleans and then came to Washington. This is quite a nice place but not so nice as I supposed it to be. Our Regiment is now in camp on a hill about eight miles from the city. I like it much better than I did in Louisiana....It is much colder here than in New Orleans so you see that makes it better for us solgers....

Well Mother you don't know how glad I shall be when my time is out, when I am a free man once more in my life.... Oh how glad I shall be when this awful war is ended and I hope it will permit me to come home once more....I hope we shall all meet again."



Elias G. McCord, 1863

Elias did return. He married, had 10 children, lived a full life span and died in 1928; he is buried in the Shawangunk Church Cemetery.

By Libby Antarsh Ross

Sources: "Banner & Bugles" by Plant, W.; Civil War Records, Town of Shawangunk, Volumes I, II, III, compiled by Ken & Alice J. Hasbrouck; The Siege of Port Hudson, National Park Service; Gallagher, G., Struggle for the Shenandoah; McCord Papers, courtesy of Gil McCord

Dear Members and Friends,

Many exciting things were sponsored this past spring a summer by the Historical Society. June was a busy month in which we held two workshops on birdhouses and planters, as well as organized a garden and art tour. Many thanks go out to **Freda Fenn** for her tireless work in organizing these events. June also brought our annual picnic. This year it was held outdoors on the lawn of the Terwilliger House in Gardiner. At the meeting we announced our new fundraiser – a Signature Tablecloth. For a small donation, individuals can sign the tablecloth and become part of Shawangunk & Gardiner local history. Similar to the tablecloth that hangs in the DuBois House, the signatures will be embroidered and the tablecloth will be hung up for display once completed.

On the work side of business, board members and volunteers have been busy this past spring and summer painting the large meeting room and offices at the Knights of Pythias House and cleaning out and stabilizing the garage at the DuBois House. Be sure to check out the new Kiosk on the front lawn of the DuBois House, built by our very own board member and talented craftsman, **Adam Seelig**. The kiosk has been a wonderful way for us to post historical activities and information. Many thanks go out to board members **Bob Mooney**, **Hal Van Aken** and **Alan Wh** who have kept the lawn and landscape in order this year.

This Fall brings more activities and events. A basket-making workshop will be held on Saturday, September 13th. If you have ever wondered about the castle on the Hudson, be sure to come on October 1st to hear more about Bannerman Island Castle. On Wednesday, November 5th, there will be an exciting talk on the First Moon Landing by Apollo. This year we will again sponsor a Tea, which will be organized by Carolyn **Crowell** and her committee. Painting will continue at the Knights of Pythias House as we start to organize the space and set up the offices. The Board welcomes all members and volunteers to become involved in some way. As always, please let us know what you would like to learn about or how you could help.

Debra Wolff
President

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

Website: <http://WallkillHistory.com>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/Shawangunk>

Thanks for paying your 2014 Dues

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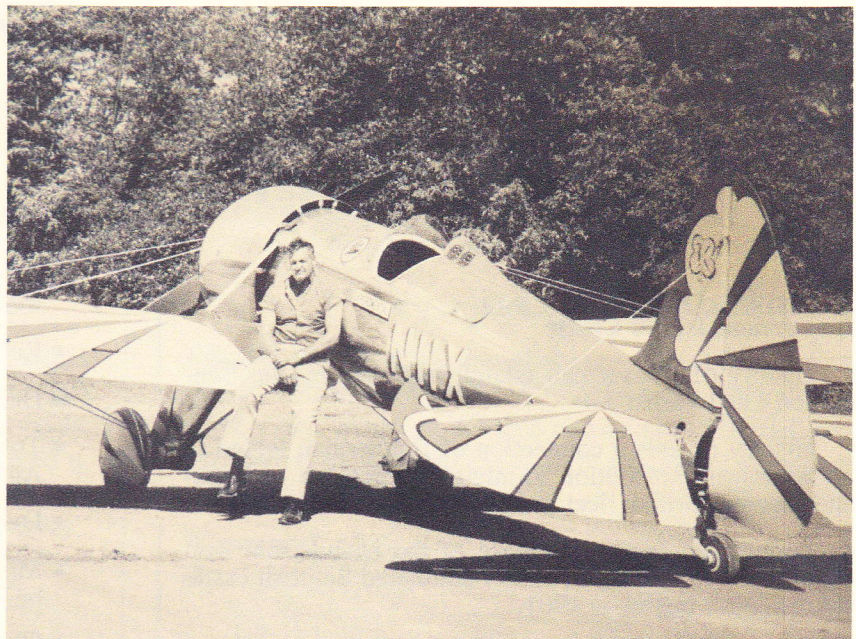
On a steamy evening on September 3 at the Shawangunk Town Hall, the Historical Society was host to a thrilling well-attended presentation of a documentary filmed at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome in Red Hook. The planes at the Aerodrome look like the 1920s in the early days of aviation. They are like a time machine. The museum, started in 1996, contains replicas of planes, based on measurements from the original planes. The guiding visionary for these planes was Cole Palen who died in 1993. He had the idea of buying five of the actual planes, not much more than sticks when he discovered them, for \$1500, from the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.; they were considered junk. Today each of these planes is valued at several MILLION dollars. It was Cole Palen's vision that these planes were not junk, but history! These planes had one or two seats and they were all flown in WWI.

When you put yourself back in the mindset of those early pilots, you step back in time. The major difference between flying the super jets of today and those seemingly flimsy airplanes of the past, is that the pioneer planes demanded a mechanical link between the pilot and the plane. The pilots risked their lives to fly for the sheer love of flying.

The Aerodrome in Rhinebeck puts on 30 air shows a year, more than any other airfield in the country.

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On the same program, the Historical Society honored the memory of William "Pappy" Kobelt who was inducted into the International Air Show Hall of Fame in Las Vegas on December 5, 2013. Pappy Kobelt was an internationally known owner-operator of the airport flying center, Kobelt Airport, near Wallkill. His daughter Barbara and other friends and family of the charismatic flyer shared stories that brought back the memory of a man who devoted his life to aviation. "He just loved flying," said Barbara.



William "Pappy" Kobelt

Historical Society of Shawangunk & Gardiner

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Return Service Requested

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**HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SHAWANGUNK &
GARDINER CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

FALL 2014 *****

Meetings are held at the Shawangunk Town Hall Community Room (14 Central Ave., Wallkill) on the first Wednesday of the month. They are open to the public and there is no charge to attend unless noted. Refreshments are served.

Saturday, September 13 – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Basket weaving workshop at Town Hall

- Instruction and making of your own basket to take home. For information and registration, call Freda Fenn 845-5895-3986

Wednesday, October 1 – 7 p.m.
Bannerman Island Castle

- History of Bannerman Island presented by the Bannerman Castle Trust
- History reveals a connection of Bannerman Island to the American Revolution in attempted defense of Highlands against British fleet in 1777
- Bannerman family purchase of the island from Taft family in 1900. Construction of simulated Scottish castle and residence begins in 1901.
- Preservation of Bannerman Castle

Wednesday, November 5 – 7 p.m. **Remembering
the Apollo Moon Landing, July 20, 1969**

Presentation by Lou Cariola of New Paltz and his critical part in putting the first man on the moon

Wednesday, December 3, 6 p.m.
Pot Luck Dinner Party at the DuBois House

Bring dish to share, your own place settings; coffee and beverage provided

**Pot Luck Meeting at The DuBois House at 75
Wallkill Avenue**

- Bring a dish to share. Snacks, Desserts, Finger-food etc.
- Refreshments with Wine & Cheese
- Dedication of School House Room
- Tours of the 1769 House built by Andries DuBois
- Display of Selected collections of historic items
- Membership drive—bring a friend that might be interested in joining
- 50—50 Drawing

BENEFIT TEA - DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED