

## NEW DONATIONS

...(OR WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR SOME THING)

The museum has been lucky to receive quite a few donations this summer. Connie Reed, who paints appealing scenes of sea sides, covered bridges, and mills, has donated many of her works to the Mill Gift Shop. These paintings are sold and their proceeds become part of our endowment fund. The O'Connor Foundation will match the income from the sale of Connie's paintings on a 1 to 1 basis.

In the useful tools category, John Willis has donated a small, modern table saw. Now, in the winter, when we can't use the mill machinery, we have a saw in our garage to use for repair jobs and other projects.

In the last newsletter you read about the donation of the Hanford piano and furniture. In addition, Fred Pugh has donated a Trevor Tub Cover Cutter similar to the machine that the Hanfords owned, which we have though it is incomplete. His is also incomplete, but hopefully, some time in the future, we can use both to create one operational tub cover cutter.

Each of these donations meets the museum's needs in different ways and they are all important, but we always need more help. If you or someone you know has an item you think the museum can use please contact Caroline Meek or Keith Bott.



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## VOLUNTEERS BRING MILL DIARIES TO LIGHT

This past summer, volunteer Doris Lamont of Delhi and Mary Sheehan of Oneonta, took part in an experiment at the museum. They began and completed the task of transcribing a 1910-1914 mill diary from the museum's manuscript collection while interpreting the Hardware Store office.

The experiment was a success. We were able to meet our two goals of expanding interpretation on the site and transcribing important historic documents. Doris and Mary did a wonderful job of interpreting the office space, and enjoyed the challenge of deciphering the sometimes cryptic diary entries. This is a project the museum would like to continue. The following is a synopsis of their findings.

Comparing known handwriting samples to the diary, we determined that Merritt Barnes, Hanford relative and office clerk, wrote most of the entries, while Horace Hanford occasionally added his own notes. The volunteers' work on this transcription is invaluable. A lot of information is packed into the 5 years of this diary.

Most entries provide information on the daily mill business. There are nearly unintelligible records listing railroad cars of corn, gluten, hominy, etc. received noting quality, price and shipping. These help us to get an idea of the materials the Hanfords were handling and in what quantities. Some entries tell about what was happening at the mill - when it closed for a day, people who got hurt, and small seemingly inconsequential events such as: "April 10, 1914 - MSB washed office windows." (MSB is Merritt). These types of entries provided information for a chronology of machines bought and used by the Hanfords (this list will be published in our machine catalog). We also learned about who visited the mill

in the course of a work day, and where Merritt, Horace, and Will went in their own travels.

The diary also tells us about events, both local and national. Merritt and Horace mention deaths and marriages in the area; there are strikes on the railroad and fires in East Meredith and Oneonta; and there are sleighing condition reports, ice houses being filled, fairs, elections, and plays. The diary has given an interesting overview of events in the lives of East Meredith residents. When Horace buys or sells his car, it is always mentioned. In May, 1912, Merritt bought a motorcycle. Two years later, in July of 1914, Merritt rode that same motorcycle to Saratoga, where he got into an accident and broke his leg on July 4. He wasn't able to return to East Meredith until December. And then, of course, there are national events, and it is interesting to see what catches the writers' attention. Events that are mentioned include Mark Twain's death, the sighting of Halley's comet, a boxing match between a white and a black man, the sinking of the Titanic, the election of President Wilson, and the war with Mexico.

The weather is mentioned almost every day. Today we may consider this unimportant, but many people in the past relied heavily on the weather and the Hanford's business was effected by it.

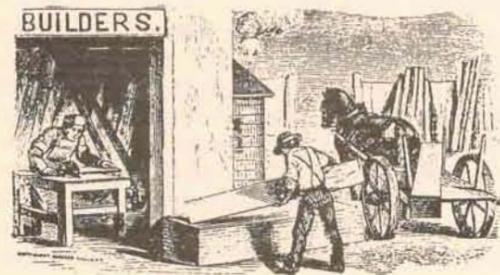
It is amazing to discover just how much information is in one diary. Doris has expressed an interest in continuing her work this winter, and we hope to find more diaries from East Meredith for her to work with. Not only is the museum interested in finding out what daily life at the mill was like, but we also want to know about the other people who worked and lived in East Meredith.



## WHAT'S NEW AT THE MILL

Things have been busy this summer at the mill, as always. First thing this spring, we installed our Beach Rolling Top Table Saw. This saw is similar to the one the Hanfords owned, and is installed in the same location, in the box room of the mill. The Beach saw has a wooden frame and a rolling table top which makes it easier and safer to make accurate cuts. The mill staff has also been using this saw, along with a two-man cross-cut saw and our Chase shingle mill to cut and prepare shingles. These were used to shingle the ice house roof this summer.

In our ongoing search to continue to make Hanford Mills an interesting visit, the museum with the help of a New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) grant, brought in experts on folkways, social history, industrial history and interpretation to help us evaluate the way we present the mill to visitors. They visited for two days, toured the site and participated in discussions. The final report from this project will identify the areas the museum should focus on during the next 5-10 years.



## UP AND COMING EVENTS

The museum's Fall Festival of Events is over, but there is still more to come, so mark these dates to remember on your calendar:

December 1st — is our annual Members Holiday Gathering. Like last year, the party will be in the John Hanford House with refreshments, your favorite holiday songs, and sleigh rides (weather permitting - pray for snow!).

February 3, 1991 — our Traditional Ice Harvest day. Last year's staff and visitors packed our new ice house to the brim, and we had ice for our Fourth of July ice cream. We had so much fun last year, we're going to fill the ice house again. Come and join us - help cut ice, load it on a horse-drawn bobsled, and watch it get packed away to cool next summer's hot days.

There are many chapters to the story of Hanford Mills and the Village of East Meredith. You often hear about the Hanfords in many of these stories, but there were also women busy in East Meredith, and often at the mill, too.

While the women in the Hanford family (and there quite a few) had little to do with the mill, other women did do business with the Hanfords. Before there were many stores in East Meredith, the mill had some of the articles that women were looking for, and through the 1860s and 70s many are listed in the daybooks. They mainly came to buy flour, meal, feed and seed; which they bought by the sack, peck, bushel, pound, and barrel. They also came occasionally to buy lumber and building supplies, and somehow, in 1872, Angie Quackenbush was able to buy a pair of kid gloves from the mill. Kid gloves were not a normal mill product, of course, and this kind of article doesn't appear again anywhere else in the records.

These women customers ran up bills which they settled in a number of ways. Some paid with cash, while others brought in items for barter, such as ashes or logs. They also bartered their labor. A few of the women are recorded as working for the Hanfords to pay off what they owed. Mrs. Mary Mitchell paid off \$3 of her bill by working three days in July of 1876. Three dollars were good wages at that time. Most likely, these women did not work at the mill, but probably in D.J. Hanford's dairy which was part of his farm. D.J. also had a regular dairy maid (Mate or Mary Haxtun in 1870), and she too is listed in the daybooks.

In later years, as East Meredith grew and had more stores and shops, women appear less frequently in the daybooks. A Sarah Boswell bought some pictures (possibly photographs) in 1882, and is listed in the daybook. Other examples include Mrs. W.A.A. Brown of "The Pines" who bought coal and 1 pine board in 1905, and Mrs. R. Green who bought a quilting frame in 1907.



In the archived collection of business letters we can actually read some of the letters these women wrote to the Hanfords. Mrs. James A. Odell was having some repairs made on her home in 1901. She wanted good quality siding, shingles, flooring, ceiling, windows and doors. She inquired if the Hanfords could help, and closed her letter this way: "Please answer soon. I am alone with two little children and cannot well go from house to see about such things. When my husband was living you dealt with us." The Hanfords answered they they would be pleased to have her order, and seemed touched by her situation. Other women also ordered materials for house repairs, even if their husbands were alive. It seems that often the



Life wasn't all work. Libbie Hanford Barnes (lower left) posed with a few of her friends.

home was the woman's domain and she was in charge of its maintenance as well as daily care.

Of course, the husband always paid the bill...well, almost always. There are a few letters in the collection that indicate that men didn't always remember to or couldn't pay the bills. In 1903, Mrs. Emma Bolles wrote: "As J.H. Bolles does the business I thought he had settled with you." She enclosed the money for their bill with this letter saying she had another order, but would send the specifics later. Mrs. George Douglas in that same year, wrote that she never sent out checks while her husband was away unless he told her to do so. The Hanfords would have to wait for his return before his account could be settled. She wrote: "...he is not a skin, although he may have been painted to you as such." Mrs. Douglas was quick to defend her husband. And then in 1917, Mrs. Cornelia Barker endorsed a note for \$40.82 for M.W. Barker & Son, and when the note was past due the Hanfords looked to Mrs. Barker for settlement.

The women mentioned above did their business with the Hanfords in conjunction with their husbands, but there are a few women who dealt with the Hanfords on their own. In 1903, Bernice Osborn from Treadwell wrote that she would come by to pick up an engine. She wrote that she would have to come early to get it ready to load, and then she would also need to order some fixtures for it. The important word in her letter is "I", not "we". She seems to know what she is talking about, and plans to take care of it herself.

Another unique woman is Dr. Gertrude A. Peck of Davenport Center and Oneonta. In Elizabeth Hanford's diary (D.J. Hanford's aunt), Dr. Gertrude Peck first appears as the doctor at the birth of Elizabeth's grandson in 1883. Gertrude was born in Davenport Center, her father was a doctor and ran a drug-store, and after she married, her husband

(originally a tanner) also became a doctor. She appears in the Hanford business records in 1903 (after her husband died), offering the Hanfords "the instrument" for \$5 and also a share in the Meredith Telephone Company. There is no record of exactly what she was selling. By that time, she had moved to Oneonta and in an ad she ran in the Daily Star she wrote: "Diseases of women and children a specialty." This is not a surprising statement for a women doctor of the period. While her husband was also a doctor, she seemed to handle all her own business dealings.

One of the most interesting letters is from Adaline Barnes in Oneonta, in the summer of 1898. Adaline's father, Harvey, was a cooper who frequently bought tub covers from the Hanfords. He was listed on their books until April, 1898, and then the next record comes from Adaline in June. Somewhere in that time, Harvey died. Adaline sent a letter complaining about the quality of tub covers, writing: "...you never sent father such trash...now dont think for one moment that because you are dealing with a woman that we dont know good covers...I could put them to gather better my self..." (the spelling is Adaline's). She also threatened to go to someone else for covers, but she continued to order from the Hanfords. Presumably, the quality of the covers improved. By 1899, a Solon Barnes, perhaps a brother, seems to have taken over the business. You have to admire a woman of that time for attempting to run a business after her father's death.



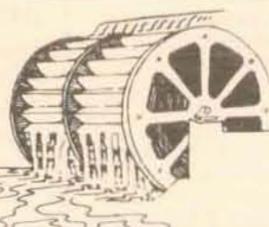
All in all, though, most women were not as ambitious and forward as Gertrude and Adaline. There were many women in East Meredith. Some were in business as milliners, maids and teachers, though most took care of families and home life. They were an integral part of the community, and in an emergency they did their fair share of the work. The Delaware County Dairyman newspaper in 1891, praised the women in East Meredith for their help in fighting a potentially dangerous fire. "They worked as energetically, carrying water and removing goods, as did the men."

So when you look at Hanford Mills and East Meredith and try to imagine how it must have been like in the past; along with D.J. and Horace Hanford, the store owners, the farmers and the mill workers, put in an occasional woman to round out the picture. There were women both at home and at work in East Meredith, and they need to be remembered.

[Look for an article on "The Hanford Wives" in a future edition of Millwork.]

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