

Gem of the Mountains



Spring 2013 • Edition I

The Boonton Historical Society & Museum

Recollections of Boonton 1887-1897

By Duane E. Minard

In response to the interest generated by Mr. Minard's recollections in our previous Gem of the Mountains (Winter 2012) and the interest in Boonton's more recent past posted by so many of you on our Facebook page, we decided to publish more of Mr. Minard's stories of Boonton and more memories of Boonton by Rick Wendt.

DOCTORS

Before my time in Boonton, Doctor (John) Grimes lived at the south corner of Main and Liberty Streets, where it was said, he maintained a pre-Civil War underground railroad station for concealing Negro slaves who were on the run-away flight to safety and freedom in Canada. (see Editor's Note)

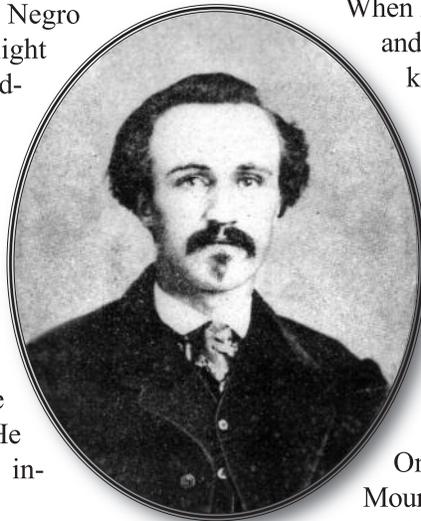
In my time, a Doctor Grimes lived on the road that led from the Troy Hills Road from lower Montville, opposite Joe Bostedo's lane and the old Boonton Road near the County House (now flooded by the Jersey City Reservoir). He lived in a large brick house with the stables across the road from the house. He practiced throughout the countryside, including Boonton.

In the town of Boonton, the first doctor I knew was Doctor John J. Ryerson, who lived at the corner of Main and Williams Streets, with the house facing the south side of William Street. His practice was spread all

over the surrounding country and he was our family doctor at Montville from 1881 until his death. He was a brusque individual and disliked malingerers. One time, Liza Jane Tucker, wife of Wilse Tucker, operator of the plane car on the lower plane at Montville, who was the chronic malingerer of the community, thought she was "ailin" and sent for Doctor Ryerson. When he arrived she was lying on the couch apparently in much distress. He took a look at her, pulled off his heavy bearskin gloves and flung them in her face. The enraged woman was immediately cured and chased him out of the house.

When I knew him Dr. Ryerson had lost his wife and only son. He lived alone in his big house, kept by a housekeeper and a man servant. He was a wise and note (sic) physician and surgeon throughout the wide countryside. He brought me and some of my brothers and sisters into the world. He is said to have discovered the cause of "inflammation of the bowels" to be really the later popular disease of appendicitis and to have performed the first operation for its removal.

One time he was coming down Hibernia Mountains from a call at Marcella, when an explosion occurred in the Hibernia iron mines at the foot of the hill. He whipped up his horse and hurried to the town of Hibernia. The dead, wounded and maimed were being carried out of the



Dr John Grimes

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Some More Small Town Memories: A Fall Night in Boonton

By Rick Wendt

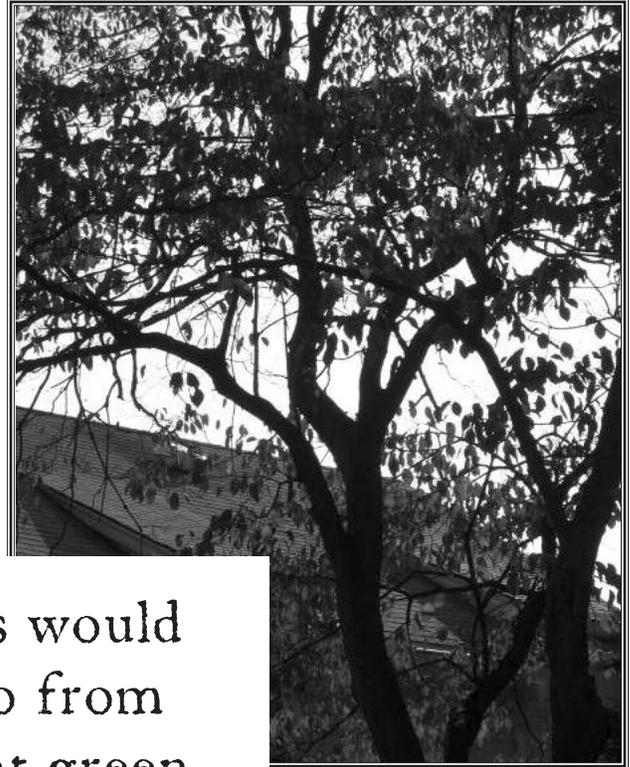
Fall. Just that name brings the thought of bumps and bruises. I think it was named wrong, I think it should have been named...

When I was young I would know it was coming when I would first see some of those 'V' formations in the sky. I could hear the far off call of the geese as they plied their way south, high, so very high, in the sky. The trees would start to go from their bright green to the colors of an artist's smock. Splashes of red and yellow and gold and amber as they dressed for their one last shout before the Winter.

Then one night I would hear it. A wind would blow and you could hear those leaves as they brushed the window on their way to the ground - a little tap and a soft slide across the glass. Mr. Nathan's tree, the big maple in the back, it was always last. Sometimes, it would hold its bright crimson leaves until deep into the Winter. I loved the way it stood so strong against the season's change.

One day we would wake and they would be down. So each step you took was upon a wondrously different leaf, No two would carry the same pattern or color, each just a little different than the last. We would rake them into little piles, marshalling them towards the edge of the road. Long neat rows of leaves snaking down each side of the road, some taller and longer than the next.

On an evening when a light jacket was all that was needed and a wind that did not blow. There seemed to be a call, not one out loud, but just felt. All the Dads would come outside and the piles would be set aflame. Small fires would be started at one end and a slow



“The trees would start to go from their bright green to the colors of an artist's smock... one last shout before the Winter.”

march of flame would begin to devour the years tailings.

No one could ever forget that smell of burning leaves and the snapping and popping of them as the rise of a smoky wisp into the gathering darkness, little fireflies shooting up and fading away. I can't

forget my Dad with his rake turning the ashes to make sure all was consumed in the caldron of flame. Each house with their own Dad silhouetted against the dancing flicker of light.

When it was over, all was devoured and just a small pile of ash remained that blew away on the wings of the next small breeze.

Call it Fall? No, maybe it should be... Not forgotten.

"Boonton was an Iron Town"

By Rick Wendt

Me Ma and Pop Pop lived next door. My Grandparents on my Fathers side. My Father and Pop Pop worked together at their machine shop down town. And everyday at 7:20 Dad would go next door and he and Pop Pop together would drive to the shop. I remember the smell of those clothes he had on. Machine oil and smoke, not in a bad way, but in a way a Daddy is supposed to smell. Those crisp gray shirt and pants in the morning would be returned dirty and smudged by the days end.

I bet Me Ma & Pop Pop rued the day when I became able to trundle those few steps between our homes and open that screen door.

Me Ma was a small gentle women. She was always busy but not to busy for me. Everyday she would walk up the Del's Village to get the day's meals. She never learned to drive and would walk where she could and wait for Pop Pop to bring her the places she could not. I would hear her cart as it bumped its way down the curb of the driveway and the SLAM of the screen door as it closed behind her. I would not be far behind!

In the summer it was Ginger Ale and a Peach. In the cold months it was Ovalteen and a Gingersnap! But it was always something. She seemed to know just what I needed!

Pop Pop seemed to be the smartest man I ever met. At evening he would sit and read the paper in that small kitchen and do the crossword. He had this big desk in the corner of the den that had papers and books flowing out of every hole that could accommodate them. Those glasses propped on his nose, he would read or write with comments thrown towards the News Anchor as he did.

In the winter they had a fire place that would draw me like a fly to the light. On a small wool tied rug in front of the fire place, I would lay and watch and listen to the fire and the Nightly News that seemed always to be on. Me Ma in her Rocker and Pop Pop in his place. I feel warm now thinking of it.

Pop Pop gave me the 1st book I remember reading.

"Scouts of 76". It was about a boy growing up in our area. In it were places that I knew and could go see. Familiar spots and sites that brought that book alive to me. It was the first time I understood that reading and writing could move your heart and take you places far away. With that book I asked questions and he gave answers.

We would walk along the river in Grace Lord Park and he would show me things that were hidden from those just passing by. Lover,s Lane and the real reasons for the big rock walls and tunnels. He brought back the Iron mills and mines with the Canal and Railroad thrown in. He took me to the Tourne and showed me springs and the "Tipping Rock" and how he with "Just this little lever I can move the world...."

Pop Pop loved his town and wrote about it in "Boonton Was an Iron Town". It would never hit the top 10 anywhere but I still read it every once in a while!

As I grew and moved around Pop Pop would change every time I came home. As he aged he started to lose his "self". It hurt me to see him like that. I was sorry that he could not be himself and add to my children's lives. Me Ma too faded after he was gone. She hung on with a tenacity that was inspiring. Bed ridden the last few years of her life. But those eyes...Me Ma's eyes...that smile was always in them...that love always flowed from their gaze. Getting old is a thing we must all come to grips with. But I prefer to remember them younger!

I miss that hug that was always there. The answer to any question I could ask. The thrill of exploring our area from the passenger seat of Pop Pop's car or the paths of our historic past.

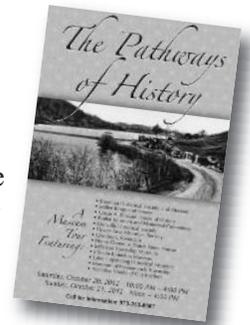
Boonton is an Iron Town. It forged the ties that bind me to it. The rails that bring me back to it time and again. It "Steeled" my faith in the power of Family and Friends. It gives me still now a reason to smile!

Editor's Note: You can purchase your own copy of Boonton Was An Iron Town in the Museum Gift Shop.

Pathways of History

In 2010 the Boonton Historical Society, together with the historical societies of Boonton Township, Montville Township, Butler, and Kinnelon, were the founding members of this highly regarded tour. With a mission to promote small, volunteer-run museums in Morris County, in 2012 the tour grew to include eleven museums, with thirteen locations open for the event. From civil war re-enactors, quilt displays, slide

presentations, and guided house tours to refreshments at every stop, this two-day event truly had something for everyone.



Richard West, Pamela Hance and Jennifer Coultas documented the tour for us. Here are just a few highlights to hopefully tempt you to join us again in 2013.



Boonton Historical Society Museum (JSL Greentree Exhibit)



Miller Kingsland House, Boonton



Oscar Kincaid Home of History, Boonton Twp



Museum of Pequannock Township



L'Ecole Kinnelon Museum



Jefferson Township Museum



Henry Doremus Dutch Stone House





Glenburn, Riverdale



Lake Hopatcong Historical Museum

Dover Area Historical Society

Denville Historical Society



Nicholas Vreeland Out kitchen



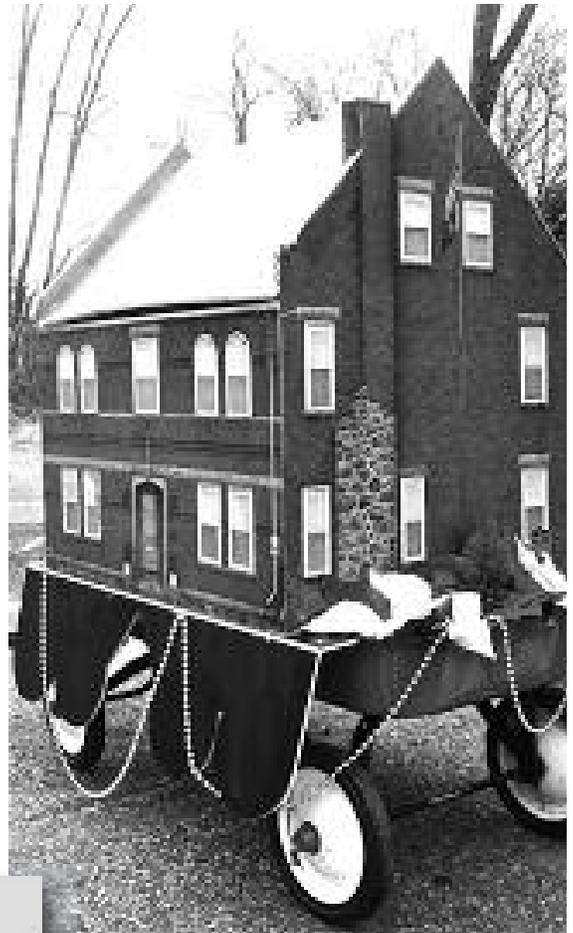
Linda Barth, Jennifer Coultas, Peggy Spranzani

The Pathways of History

We hope to see you on the 2013 tour. Take this opportunity to see history come alive in our local museums. Admission is free at all locations.

Did We Mention That We Won An Award At The Boonton Holiday Parade?

Entitled "Honoring Boonton's Past" our float of miniature historic buildings (The John Taylor House, the Miller-Kingsland House, the Holmes Library and the Civil War Memorial) was awarded second prize.



Gary Rintz, Jennifer Coultas & Jayme Januszonis

JSL Greentree: A Woman Ahead of Her Time

Our current exhibit, curated by Daniel Clark, is entitled “Roots, Rocks, and Rust – the Visionary Landscapes of JSL Greentree” and features the art, artistry, and architectural designs of the award-winning, environmental activist and longtime resident of Morris County, JSL Greentree.

Original hand-drawn renderings of her landscape designs, featuring her distinctive flourishes and planting details, are mounted for close inspection in a recreation of her office environment. Her voluminous library of reference books and periodicals are displayed throughout the exhibit alongside examples of the gleaned knowledge. The rustic furniture she made is accompanied by books that describe the process. The unsurpassed collection of Adirondack sawmill blades she collected in countless trips to the region hang in mute irony to her passion for all things green. Slide shows of her interests in native plants, natural design, and low maintenance gardens run continuously on digital screens. Living bonsai is on display among her curated collection of miniature bonsai pots and picture books on the subject. Rusted metal relics, re-imagined as alien creatures, invite the viewer to see the effects of time on industry. Elements of the hand-built, arts-and-

crafts style Habberstad house she lived in, and other examples of the Habberstad homes featured in an earlier exhibit, have also been recreated for this exhibit. (NorthJersey.com)



JSL Greentree

A woman many years ahead of her time, Greentree was a pioneering environmentalist who founded one of the first recycling centers in New Jersey. She was one of the first females admitted to the prestigious “American Society of Landscape Architects”, worked for the nationally acclaimed design house of “Lawrence Halperin and Associates”, and took her greatest pleasure changing abused city spaces into children’s inspiration. Greentree was an active member of several local community groups including the Boonton Township Open Space committee, the Native

Plant Society, the Great Swamp Bonsai Club, Friends of the Rockaway River, and City Green. Her most recent projects include the award-winning design for the Mountain Lakes Cove Restoration in 2011 and the City Green Learning Garden in Paterson in 2010.

Our exhibit of her life’s work will run for several months at the museum.(see additional exhibit photographs on Page 4).



Boonton before I-287. Can you name the stores on the left?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

ANSWERS: Macolini's Barber Shop, Kanouse Radio Shop, Sweet Shop, Makovsky's Meat Market, American Legion (now the Boonton Museum)

Continued from page 1:

Recollections of Boonton 1887-1897

mine shaft and brought to the company store when he arrived. He immediately took off his coat, ordered the counters to be cleared and all the butcher knives boiled up. With rolled up sleeves he began his operations cutting off crushed limbs, treating wounds and bruises, until the job was done. Then he drove away. Doctor Ryerson died at an advanced age and was buried in the Ryerson family plot in the cemetery of one of the first seven Dutch Reformed Churches in New Jersey at Pompton Plains.

There was another doctor, Doctor Carpenter, who lived with the Green family at the north corner of Church and Birch Streets. He was a heavy drinker and the “fashionable” doctor in town. Some of his patients refused to call him in a case of sickness, because he was usually “three sheets to the wind.”

Later Doctor Cuthbert C. Wigg, the son of a Methodist minister, came to Boonton and married the daughter of the Jacobus family and established his office in their home on Lathrop Avenue, third house from the eastward turn, where the high school is now located. He was our family doctor after Doctor Ryerson died.

In 1897, Dr. John Taylor, son-in-law of Judge Kanouse

built his house on the west side of the slope from the railroad bridge on Main Street, just above Ed Backer’s store and practiced there until he died. That building is now occupied by the American Legion.

(Editor’s Note: Dr. Taylor and his wife Adelaide (Kanouse) moved to Chula Vista, California, in 1917. Their former home on Main Street now houses the Boonton Museum).

CARPENTERS

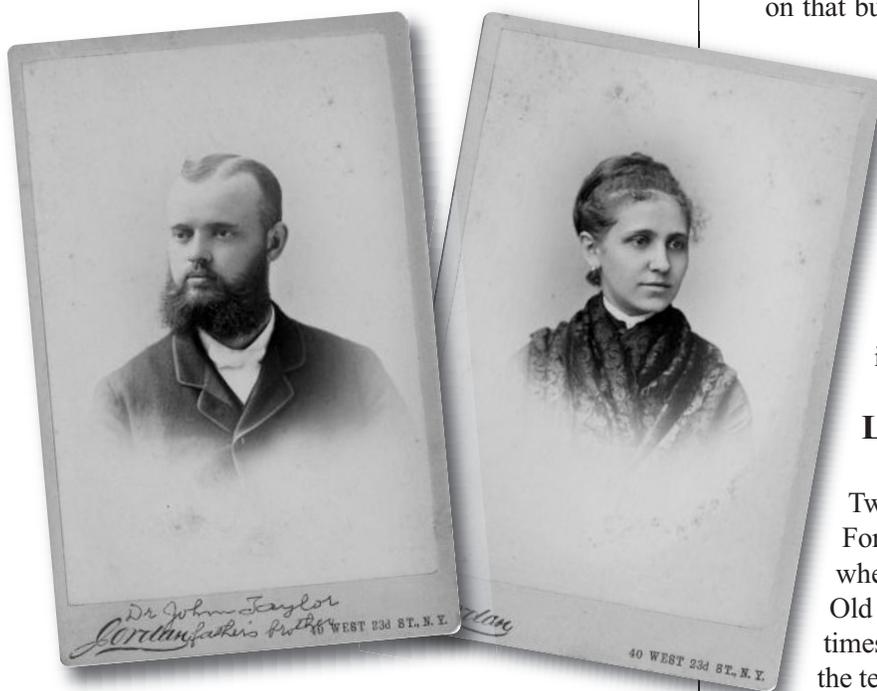
The first, and only, strictly carpenter business was carried on in a lane which entered from Myrtle Avenue between Bill Conover’s and a man named Smith (I think the father of W. P. Smith, the Boonton freight agent). This lane led to the canal opposite Tom Ned Miller’s lock, and the shop was next to the canal. This carpenter business was conducted by Harvey Hopley with his son Jim, a Mr. Conklin, and others. Jim Hopley was also a bicycle racer and the chief contestant of Ray Dawson at the Witch Grounds (see Gem of the Mountains – Winter 2012).

William H. Grimers of Fox Hill had his shop there, but did work in Boonton. He had a son, Henry, who carried on that business awhile and then went into the feed business at Andrew Decker’s gristmill in Monville.

Another shop was operated by S. C. Todd, who lived next door, at the eastern end of Myrtle Avenue. He made only window sashes, completely glazed, doors and window blinds. Later in my time Dave Conklin entered into the carpenter business in Boonton and did work in Montville.

LIVERY STABLES

Two livery stables existed in Boonton. Henry Ford kept one on the west side of Plane Street, where it joined Main Street at the lower end. Old Sim Showery was his stableman and sometimes driver. Ford kept a hearse and furnished the team and driver for funerals.



Dr. John Taylor and Adelaide Kanouse Taylor

Continued on next page.

He ran a hack to carry passengers between the town and the railroad passenger station at the foot of the southerly entrance to the park. He had a colored hackman who was asked to put down in his book a reminder to meet a certain train in the afternoon. He told the passenger that if he did so, he would forget to look at the book.

Another livery stables was kept on Mechanic Street by Peg Francisco, who had two sons, one called Red who worked at the livery table, and one or the other drove hack for railroad passengers to and from the old passenger station.

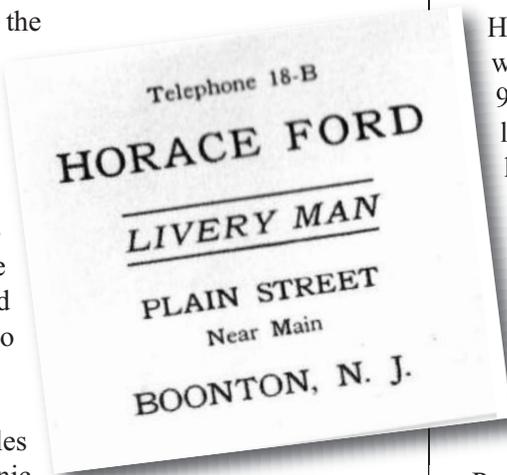
When the new station was built on Myrtle avenue, no hack was necessary. Frank Bloxham was passenger agent. He had married Rev. Taylor's daughter, who lived next door in the Park and had a son named Ed.

LUMBER YARDS

When I first knew Boonton, the only lumber yard was located near the eastern end of Myrtle Avenue and was kept by Henry Salmon & Son (William). In front of the office was the only weighing scale in town. Abe Smith was his delivery man and lived in the Salmon Hose opposite the office. He drove a team of big white horses that never moved off a walk and carted lumber throughout Boonton and the countryside. On his return trips, he sat on a blanket on the "hounds" of the running gears of the wagon with his feet hanging down. His son William succeeded him in the business.

Henry Salmon, who was the brother of Peter the horse dealer and Joshua the lawyer, had another son Harry who kept a coal yard at Forest Hill, along the Erie's West Orange branch and North Newark. When he retired, Harry came to live in the house at the north corner of Essex and Reserve Streets in the park.

Still later, E. B Dawson opened a lumber yard at the east end of Division Street, next to the Boonton Feed and Supply Company, and put his son, Nicholas, in charge.



MILKMEN

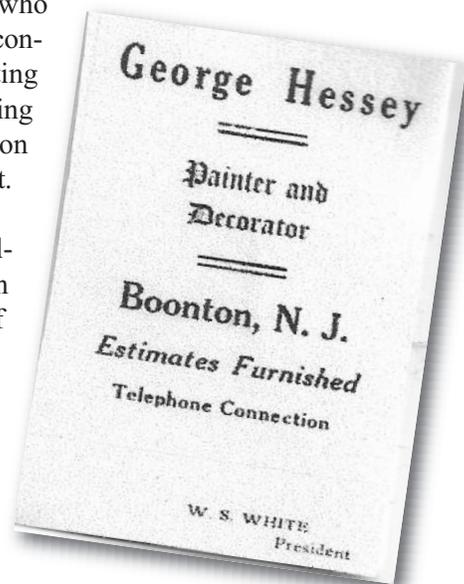
Hughey Cullen of Lower Montville drove a milk wagon about the Hill in Boonton and sold milk from 9-gallon cans set in front of him, from which he ladled milk with a pint dipper with a straight, long handle that came straight up from the dipper, and poured into the pails or pitchers of the people who came out to the wagon. His admonition to his horse was "Gidep, Mary Ann, the Irish is waitin' for milk." He was an old man and, in bad weather or when he was indisposed, his daughter Katie drove the milk wagon.

Another milkman from Old Boonton Road, named Peer, sold milk in Boonton and another (man) named Simms from the Parsippany road sold milk in Boonton. The farms of both Peer and Simms are now covered by the Jersey City Reservoir.

PAINTERS AND PAPERHANGERS

At first, George Hessey of Brook Street was the only painter and paperhanger in Boonton. Later, Jo (Josephus) Dixon, Jr. who had no store but conducted the painting and paperhanging from his house on Washington Street.

A man named Elliot had a store on the west side of Main Street, nearly opposite William Street, where he sold wallpaper and did painting and paperhanging.



Martin Blanchard of Montville, and Jim Lish of Lower Montville also did painting and paperhanging in Boonton, as well as the Peer brothers of the Kingsland Bridges Road, (these are) now under the Jersey City Reservoir

(Editor's Note: More about Dr. Grimes and the Underground Railroad in Boonton:)

Continued on next page.

DR. JOHN GRIMES

A medical doctor, abolitionist, vegetarian, newspaper publisher, who also promoted temperance, Dr. Grimes provided shelter for escaping slaves on the Underground Railroad. Slaves making their way to freedom during the Civil War knew they could find some safety in the Boontons at the hall of Dr. John Grimes, located at Liberty and Main streets. The hall served as a meeting place for slaves before New Jersey became a free state. A Domino's Pizza is now located on the corner where Dr. Grimes' hall once stood.

THE POWERVILLE HOTEL

From the Grimes House, they were sent to the Powerville Hotel, a wood-frame building on North Main Street along the banks of the former Morris Canal. The hotel was built in 1828 in the earliest days of the canal by William Scott, who ran the iron works. The hotel was built to accommodate visitors on the canal, as well as the canal's builders. It is thought that slaves most likely hid outside the hotel, or in the hotel's barn. Nathan Hopkins bought the hotel just before the outbreak of the Civil War, around 1853, and it became a stop on the Underground Railroad soon afterward.



The Powerville Hotel Today

Hopkins' son, Charles, who was captured as a soldier of the Union Army and survived incarceration in the Andersonville Prison, was known to have driven slaves under cover by wagon up Splitrock and Charlottesburg roads to a town called Canistear, which was beyond Newfoundland and West Milford. From there slaves went on to freedom in Canada.

UPDATE

Helen Dixon Kunzelmann's Donation to our Museum

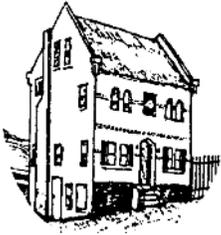


*Helen
Kunzelmann*

It is 14 months since we were the grateful beneficiaries of \$100,000.00 from the estate of Helen Dixon Kunzelmann. Helen moved from Boonton to Vermont long before any of us got to know her, so we were happy to receive this photo of her recently. We now know to whom we are grateful.

Her very generous donation certainly gave us some breathing room in terms of meeting our recurring annual expenses. Insurance and security fees for the museum are in excess of \$3000 annually, which is a substantial amount for a small organization like ours. While we still intend to hold fund raising events to pay our various out of pocket expenses, the trustees have elected to take a responsible and somewhat cautious approach to our money management posture by investing a substantial amount for future development projects, while at the same time allocating funds for various urgent museum needs.

In 2012 we paid for restoration of deteriorating brick work on the museum exterior; replaced some of our aging computer equipment, purchased archival materials for our expanding collections and a rack for our costumes. In addition, water damaged paintwork, purchase of additional archival quality storage and gift shop supplies, as well as exhibit and special event expenditures are on our "to do" list for the coming year. We would not have been able to accomplish some of these tasks so immediately had we not received Helen's donation.



The Boonton Historical Society & Museum

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Open Sundays from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
and by appointment.

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Opinions expressed in the Gem of the Mountains are not necessarily those of the society.

A Poem on The Beauties of Boonton *By Mrs. Newton S. Kitchel*



If you go to old Manhattan
And take a flying train.
And ride at your best for an hour to the west
Through forest and village and plain,
You will reach our little city
With its woodlands green and dim,
And the ancient wall of mountains tall
On the blue horizon's rim.

There's a river that sings in the sunlight,
And talks where the pine trees grow,
And ripples an plays through the forest ways
Till it reaches the lake below.
And fair as the land of Beulah,
In Bunyan's sacred dream.
Is our Boonton view reaching up to the blue,
And sloping down to the stream.

You should reach our little city
In the season of opening leaves,
When Spring with her emerald shuttle,
Her garment of beauty weaves.
There are birds and brooks and blossoms,
And blossoms and brooks and birds,
And a song for a poet – could he but now it –
Too precious and sweet for words.

Come to us in the Autumn
When the shuttle is rainbow-dyed;
Not the Hebrew king in hid glory,
Was arrayed like our mountain-side,
O, the golden-rod and the aster!
The brooks whence the laugh hath fled!
And the heart stand still, with a throb and a thrill,
To think that Summer is dead.

Come when the wild white Winter
Sweeps down with a laugh and a shout,
And in armor of blue and silver
Stand the sentinel hills about.
Come when you will to Boonton—
'Twill be twice is you come at all –
In every season has beauty reason,
For her sweet, insistent call.

What says the Arabian proverb?
"Hast thou two loaves of bread,
Sell one and buy thee hyacinths
To feed thy soul instead."
And may never the ring of the dollar,
Clanging ever so close to the ear,
E'er deaden the voice that bids us rejoice
In the beauty now held so clear.