

The next meeting of the AHS board will be May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006. To attend, please contact Charlotte Murphy at 373-9906

# Amenia Historical Society

...where what was old is new again

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## Digging in the Archives



*The home of the noted Dr. Desault Guernsey stood just south of Immaculate Conception Church. The horse fountain in Fountain Square was dedicated in memory of his son by his widow, Alice. The house was demolished in the 1950's.*

## Guernsey Family Comes Home Again to Perry's Corners

**Worthy of Record: the Settlers of Perry's Corner(s)**  
A special program by Betsy Strauss, member of AHS  
April 23, 2006 at Kildonan School

It was standing room only that rainy Sunday afternoon. Members of the Guernsey family, one of the early families of the now sparsely populated crossroads on the border of Amenia and Town of Northeast, had come from Syracuse, from Clinton Corners and as far away as the state of Virginia. Esther Cook, a Guernsey herself, welcomed Perry's Corner(s) neighbors who today live in homes dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Interested Amenia Historical Society members were delighted with the guests.

The program was part 3 of the AHS member-lecturer series featuring the collections and interests of historical society members. The first two presentations in the series were given by John Quinn on the Civil War and John Whiteford on his famous button collection. AHS is justly proud of the scholarship and breadth of interests of its members.

A special presentation was made to the society by Judith Young-Thayer, author of the definitive book on the Guernsey family. In memory of Catherine Leigh, former Town Historian, Mrs. Thayer gave the 2005 edition of the Guernsey-Guernsey Genealogical Dictionary, the re-publication of an earlier book on that subject.

The speaker, Betsy Strauss, has been researching the family that built the house she and husband Julian now occupy.

Since the Guernsey/Garnsey family is so large and since the members lived in this area from 1758 until 1933, Betsy has been working on this project for some time.

Finding the history of her own house to be so interesting, she soon was researching surrounding properties including the former homes and farms of the Collins, Willson, Mead, Paine and Perry families, not to speak of the land holdings of the subsequent Guernsey generations. She described and showed photos and maps of the crossroads near what is now Kildonan School. She told of the one room school, the general store, blacksmith shop and near by grist mill that had existed there.

For more info on Perry's Corner(s) and the Guernsey family contact Betsy at [jmsvet@aol.com](mailto:jmsvet@aol.com)

## Programs Coming Up...

June 10: Strawberry Fair 10-2

August 6: Farmers' Day at Indian Rock. Antique farm tools demonstrated, farm wives' activities and children's old time games. Bring a picnic lunch and water to drink. Noon to 2 pm free.

Sept. 10 : Smithfield Church & Cemetery at 2 pm

### Other suggested Programs:

Morgan's Cider Mill & Amenia Center hamlet

Amenia Union Memories

Gridley Iron Empire & Mt. Toby quarry

Amenia hamlet walking tour: the Solomon Cook house

*Ideas, suggestions and volunteers: write to Bill Burke [janandbill59@yahoo.com](mailto:janandbill59@yahoo.com)*

### Available Publications:

[Early History of Amenia by Newton Reed](#)

[Amenia Cookbook](#)

[Lake Amenia Booklet Reprint](#)

[Finding Aid for Amenia's Historical & Cultural Resources](#)

*Also a selection of postcards*

*Write to Treasurer Catherine Murphy:*  
[murphycm@mohawk.net](mailto:murphycm@mohawk.net)

*for prices and information*



left to right: Esther Guernsey Cook, of North East, Dr. Arthur Ungerer from Syracuse, Mr. Jerry Thayer of Hampton, VA, and, standing in front of him, his wife Judith L. Young-Thayer, a Garnsey descendant and author of the Garnsey-Guernsey genealogy book, Mary Rice Ungerer of Syracuse, NY, and her brother, Mr. Everett Rice of Frederick, MD. Esther, Mary, and Everett are children of the last generation of Guernseys to be born at the Guernsey homestead in Amenia a century ago.

### A word from Betsy Strauss:

*"I began my research on the history of Perry's Corner(s) in 1998, after we moved a small house from the intersection onto our property. In my digging through old deeds and maps, I learned that the little house we moved had once been the home of Mr. John Perry, after whom Perry's Corner(s) had been named. I also found that there was a blacksmith shop on the same corner as the one-room schoolhouse (which is now a residence), and that there was a shoeshop and a gristmill just up the road to the north of the intersection. Then, I wanted to know about the people who first settled in this neighborhood. Written histories of Amenia and Dutchess County, cemetery records, and Connecticut historical libraries have helped me put together many pieces of the puzzle."*

### Next Amenia Historical Society Program September 10th, 2 pm at Smithfield Church

Smithfield is one of the oldest hamlets in the Town of Amenia. Located to the west of the village on Route 83, off Route 44. Smithfield Valley is one Amenia's most beautiful rural landscapes, characterized by horse farms and large homes. For many years the small settlement at the end of the valley was jokingly called "The City", boasting a grist mill, blacksmith shop, school and post office.

The beautiful neo-classical Smithfield Church is actually the third church on the site. Join the historical society for a tour of the elegant interior, the simple white columned exterior and the noted cemetery nearby. Visit the site of the famous Whitefield oak and the gravestone of former town historian, Catherine Flint Leigh. Learn about many of Amenia's earliest settlers who lived in Smithfield.

Members of the congregation will be our tour guides. AHS members are encouraged to e-mail Arlene Iuliano to volunteer to bring cookies and /or punch for the refreshments.

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