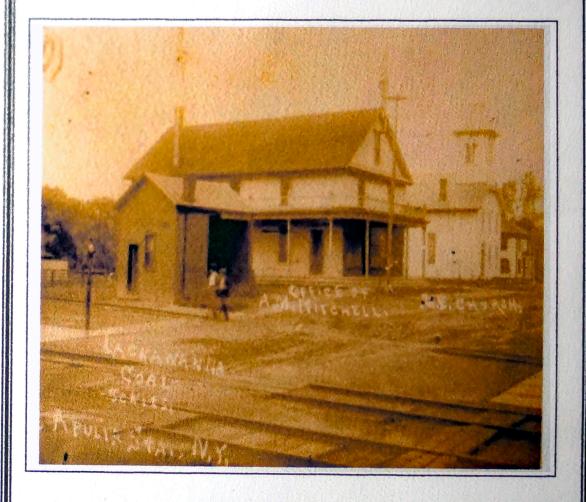
Newsletter of the Fabius Historical Society

No.16

The Cold Winter of 2009



ALEXANDER M. MITCHELL

"The Cabbage King"

Fabius Historical Society

PO Box 27 FABIUS, NY 13063



President's Message

Wow! Little did I know that just a few years ago I would end up as President of the Fabius HistoricalSociety. It all started when I looked at my father's FHS newsletter and saw a program that interested me (a bus tour in the township of Fabius). I was hooked! More good programs kept me coming, and I became a member.

Today, I still marvel at the history of Fabius and how I became a part of it, thanks to my grandparents. I have just finished transcribing a diary that my greatgrandfather, Elmon Ezra Randall, kept in 1917. It was interesting to see how neighbors helped each other, the use of horses in farming, the kinds of machinery used, and the travel from Swift Road to Tully, Apulia, and Fabius.

MUSEUM NEWS

<u>Valentines in the Forest</u> The National Ski Patrol is once again having a Valentines in the Forest event which includes a tour of the Pioneer Museum after their meal at the lodge. This will occur in the evenings of the first 3 Fridays and Saturdays in February.

Pioneer Museum

The 2009 summer schedule is June, July, and August, Saturdays and Sundays, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The museum can be opened for special events by request. Please call Al LaFrance at (315)662-7022 or Sandy Beglinger (315)683-5878. Last year there were over 1164 visitors to the museum.

The hole in the roof has been patched and a new lock was placed on the back door.

If you have any "tidbits" that you would like to share in our newsletters, please contact us.

I am blessed to have good people working with me to make the Fabius Historical Society such a great organization. Thank you one and all.

Sandy Beglinger



EXECUTIVE BOARD 2009

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Reminder:

FHS Membership dues are due by Jan. 1st of each year. Membership contributions are the major source of income for the Fabius Historical Society. Unless you become a member, you will not receive future newsletters. Please complete the enclosed membership form. If you are current with your membership please pass on the enclosed membership application and encourage others to join.

ARTICLES ALWAYS NEEDED

Please consider contributing an article for future newsletters. Our readers are always telling us that they enjoy reading the various articles submitted by Fabius residents, both past and present. You need not worry about your handwriting, punctuation or grammar; the computer works wonders. We also love old photos to copy!!!

Newsletter editors: Bill & Joanne Casey
315 683-5674, bill5308@aol.com

Your Toss is Our Loss

As you clean out your attics, basements, closets and garages and "toss" some of those neat old things in the garbage, please take a moment and consider if they would be welcome additions for the Fabius Historical Society. We are not doing recyclables or compost, but Grandma's "favorites" and Grandpa's "can't live withouts," just might be a delightful addition in the Pioneer Museum. So before you "toss", please think of us.

Contact: Sandy Beglinger @ 683-5878, Linda Meyers 683-5280 or Judy Conway 683-527

FHS 2009 PROGRAMS

All Meetings are at the Fabius Community Center Main Street, Fabius, NY

Saturday, January 3rd 2009 1 pm The Don Edward's Theatre Group

The group enjoyed a play written and directed by Don Edwards. The cast as seen below:



Gail Moreland Darothy D'Angelo
Don Edwards Sandy Beglinger
Entertained the group with a "true story" about a farmer who
in the course of his lifetime, marries three sisters.

Saturday, February 7th 1 pm

Genealogy Starter Tips along with some interesting findings on early Fabius families by Dick Hillenbrand.

Richard "Dick" Hillenbrand of the Sheds, NY has been an avid historical and genealogical researcher since the 1960's. He served on the Board of Directors of the Onondaga Historical Association for twenty years and also has served on the Board of the Central New York Genealogical Society. He is a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists (APG). Dick has been using computers for genealogical purposes since 1979 and has a background in the use of computers for industrial automation systems. He is also related to the Fabius Hodgson family. Dick operates the popular website: Upstate New York Genealogy at www.unyg.com

Saturday, Mar. 7th 1pm

Chuck D'Imperio of Oneonta, NY will speak on <u>Great Graves</u> of New York State, a book he authored. He will tell us about some very interesting people who lived and died in our state.

Monday, April 6th 7pm

Chuck and Irene Kutscher will tell us about their trip to Machu Picchu and the mountain-top farming by the Inca Indians of Peru.

Saturday, April 11th 1pm

In a special meeting Chuck and Irene Kutscher will tell us about their trip to the <u>Galapagos Islands</u> in South America.

April 15th at the Pompey Town Hall 7 pm

(sponsored by the Pompey Historical Society)

The Legacy of the Underground Railroad, by Norm Dann.

His biography on Gerritt Smith will be available. He and his wife Dot Willsey are wonderful researchers for the Town of Smithfield, Peterboro, The National Abolition Hall of Fame, etc.

Monday, May 4th 7pm

Howard Ford has had a life-long interest in historical markers of New York State and the stories behind them. He will tell us some of those stories.

Memorial Day Historical Display

Monday, June 1st 7pm

(tentative) Harvey Skeele and Bob Bitz will team up to tell us much about the history of agriculture in central New York.

Band Concert date to be announced

Monday, July 6th 7pm

(tentative) We hope to assemble some of the older, retired farmers in the area to tell us what it was like farming in the good old days. A program of this type was very successful at the Pompey Historical Society.

Monday, Aug. 3rd 7pm

Mike Durkin, Chuck Kutscher's brother-in-law comes all the way from Chicago to give us a talk entitled "Show me the money: An amble through history while looking at currency."

Monday, Sept. 14th 7pm

Steve Teal of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry will tell us about some insects which could be killing our trees and what can be done about it.

Monday, Oct. 5th 7pm

After a two year rest, Chuck Kutscher will use Halloween month to scare us with a true story about the <u>San Francisco Earthquake</u>. It is a truly remarkable story based on the fact that tectonic plates will eventually move.

Monday, Nov. 2nd 7pm

Ann Shelley and friends have mastered some of the old song standards of the past. They dress the part and sing so well. They will bring us <u>Songs from the '50s</u> which should bring back lots of memories.

Monday, Dec. 7th 7pm

We will observe Pearl Harbor Day with our annual dinner and annual business meeting. Bring a dish to share and enjoy yourself. We hope to be celebrating a year well done.

FHS MEETINGS

Chuck Kutscher, our program chairperson, has been busy putting together the 2009 schedule of program events. He has generously offered his time and has worked diligently to provide the FHS with a diverse selection of topics for our meetings, developing great power-point presentations and offering computer-generated photo duplication.

Our meetings are free and open to the public. If you would like to be a part of the refreshment committee, please

let us know.

We are always open to meeting topic suggestions. Chuck can be contacted at home: 683-9480, or at a meeting of the Historical Society. You can also email him (kutscher@gatling.us)

ORAL HISTORY RECORDINGS

Some Thoughts Shared by VP Ginny Scida

For the last year or so, it has been my privilege to transcribe interviews that Sandy Beglinger has conducted with members of the Fabius community. This is our effort to keep the stories and memories of by-gone times alive for future generations. Reading this, many of you might think that's a fine thing to do for someone connected with an historical society, but not for the everyday person. Stop for a minute and consider what you would like for your children or your grandchildren or, even, your great-grandchildren to know about you. Are there things you wish you had told them about? Experiences that, in today's world of technology, they will never have.

Just as you might be intimidated by a computer or an MP3 player, imagine what they'd do with a wringer washer or a margarine packet like those produced during the Second World War. Today's young people have no idea how connected they really are and the only way they will ever know is through hearing about earlier times from those who lived through them. These were times when newspapers were avidly read, families sat around radios to get the latest war news, people saved every scrap of metal and spring vacation was a weekend of sledding!

Just recently, I visited my mother who is 94. While I didn't grow up in this area, I found many of her experiences were common to people from here. Her youth was a mixture of innocence and hard work. Her oldest sister never went to high school. She quit school to help their widowed mother raise the other six children. Things I never knew about my mother I learned because I sat down with her and asked her the same questions that Sandy has been asking our local residents.

Imagine what experiences you could document for your family. We are willing to help you record your, or a member of your family's, experiences. Don't think that they have to be of great historical significance. Sometimes, it's just great fun to know the little things that happened so long ago.

Please feel free to contact Sandy at 683-5878, Chuck at 683-9480, or me, Ginny Scida at 683-5625, if you would like to have some of your own personal memories recorded. We will provide you with a copy or transcript of your interview free of charge. We look forward to hearing from you.

PHOTO INFO. NEEDED

Randy Vaas gave scans of these photos to Sandy Beglinger. He tells us that this was the saw mill across from Toggenberg Ski Center. Does any one recall the mill? Give Sandy a call at 683-5878





Alexander M. Mitchell

"The Cabbage King"

Alexander M. Mitchell came to Fabius from Wisconsin in 1886 as a result of chance rather than design. He recognized the opportunity and entered the cabbage growing business in Apulia Station. His business dealings were carried on in every part of the United States and, as the largest cabbage broker and dealer in the country, he became known as "The Cabbage King." It should also be a source of pride to residents of Onondaga County to know that the cabbage trade industry considered the vegetables grown in the cabbage belt in which Apulia Station is located, the best in the country, and that the busy little place on the DL&W Railroad above mentioned had a national reputation for the quality and high grade of its cabbage product and for its style of packing. Through his insistence on growing the highest quality produce and his experiments with different types of plants, Mr. Mitchell established a reputation as an authority in the field of his chosen work. He not only became a very successful and wealthy man, this place became his home and he invested a large portion of his wealth within our community.

Born in Wisconsin on Christmas Day, 1857, Mr. Mitchell was the son of Col. Alexander Mitchell and Dr. Mary Mitchell. The Col. was born in North Carolina in 1818, entered West Point Military Academy July 1, 1830, graduating on July 1, 1835 and held the highest rank in the Mexican War of all NC graduates. He served in the Florida War against the Seminóle Indians in 1836 and resigned 25 Mar. 1837; served as a US Civil Engineer 1837-38; Chief Engineer of Milwaukee and Rock River Canal, 1838: Chief Engineer of the Territory of Wisconsin, 1839-40; Counselor at Law in Cincinnati, Ohio from 1841-46. From 23 June 1846-47, he served as Colonel with the 1st Ohio Volunteers in the War with Mexico and was severely wounded in the Battle of Monterey on 21 Sep. 1846. From Apr.-June 1847, he served as Military Governor of Monterey, Mexico; Counselor at Law in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1847-49; U. S. Marshal of the Territory of Minnesota, 1849-51. The Col. died on 28 Feb. 1861 at St. Joseph's, Missouri at the age of 48; young Alexander was only three.

Mr. Mitchell's mother's maiden name was Mary A. Hitchcock, and she was the oldest daughter of Samuel H. Hitchcock, one of the pioneer residents of Onondaga County and resident of Fabius from 1840-1860. Mr. Mitchell's obituary stated that his mother "was one of the few women doctors of that time." It was because of her death in the West and her desire to be buried in the town in which she was born, that he traveled to Fabius "for a couple of weeks" with her remains. Mary A. Hitchcock was buried in the Apulia Cemetery on the corner of Berwyn Road and the Skaneateles-Hamilton Turnpike now known as NYS Route 80.

Mr. Mitchell received his education in the public schools of New York and in the West. He started his business career as a clerk to a contracting freight agent's office, and then spent some time in the employ of a large wholesale dry goods house. For two years he was engaged in the business on the Pacific coast. Not long after locating in Apulia Station in 1886, Mr. Mitchell married Mary A. Conklin (b. Dec. 1848) in 1888. She was the daughter of Josiah D. Conklin, a Fabius farmer, and their only child, Frank M. Mitchell was born in Mar. 1891 in Fabius, NY.

In September, 1894, Mr. Mitchell formed a partnership with Frank June of Apulia Station for the purpose of engaging in the produce business. That fall the first cabbage shipment was made from Apulia Station; the output being two car loads. From that point on, the industry experienced rapid growth. During the season of 1901-02, Mr. Mitchell shipped 381 carloads and competitors about fifty more. Mr. Mitchell remained in partnership with Mr. June for two years; when the firm was dissolved, Mr. Mitchell continued the business alone.

By careful inquiries Mr. Mitchell became convinced that the market could handle vastly more cabbages than had been produced in the Northern states, and he determined to make a specialty of this business. With this aim in view, he went systematically to work to convince farmers to increase their cabbage acreage. Mr. Mitchell made a careful investigation as to where the very best cabbage seed could be procured, and made arrangements to get imported seed from the most experienced growers in Denmark. This superiority of seed, the special adaptability of the soil and the pains taken in the preservation and shipment of this region's cabbage crop made Apulia Station famous in the cabbage trade. In October, 1901 Mr. Mitchell's employees, twenty-three in number, handled 167 loads from farmers' wagons, averaging two tons to the load in one day (a ton of cabbages will contain in the neighborhood of 335 heads, with the average weight of a cabbage being estimated at six pounds).

FOUR BIG WAREHOUSES FOR STORING CABBAGES. Convinced that modern, frost-proof storage facilities were absolutely necessary for the preservation of cabbages during the cold season, Mr. Mitchell managed four large warehouses equipped with all up-to-date conveniences. The buildings were situated in close proximity to the DL&W tracks, affording ideal shipping facilities. The model warehouses, the entire storage plant with a capacity of 2,200 tons were regarded by the produce trade as being the most modern in the entire state.

The first warehouse was built 1 July 1896 by D. Skeele & Son for Mr. George Gollands, at a cost of \$300 in labor; Mr. Gollands was to provide lumber, nails, etc. at his own expense. Measuring 80 feet long by 36 2/3 feet wide, with 18 foot posts, it boasted a capacity of 350 tons. For the sake of designating it from the others, it was denominated "No. 1." Like the three

warehouses subsequently erected, it was absolutely frost proof; during the excessively severe weather of the 1903 winter, Mr. Mitchell's cabbages came through untouched by the cold. Without the aid of artificial heat, the temperature inside the warehouses remained above 30, no matter how cold it was outside. The walls of the building, which were alike in all the warehouses. were formed of six-inch studding, allowing an equivalent air space. Both inside and out, the joists were celled with matched boards covered with building paper, then furred out one inch and again celled inside and out, with an inch space between the boards, making a substantial bulwark against the frost of four thicknesses of lumber and two of paper, with one six-inch and two one-inch air chambers. The storage houses were all provided with refrigerator doors, and the windows were provided with heavy blinds.



Warehouses Nos. 2 and 3 of the group were designed by Frank Scullins of Syracuse, built in 1901 by D. Skeele & Son, at a cost of \$2126 in labor; materials provided at owner's expense. Similar in size, shape and arrangement, the dimensions of each were 72 by 40 feet with a capacity of 350 tons. The great expansion of Mr. Mitchell's business was demonstrated in the size of the fourth warehouse erected in 1903, with a capacity of 1,200 tons of cabbages, or over 300 tons more than the other three houses combined. The building was 172 feet long and 48 feet wide, and in exterior appearance and construction, similar to the other buildings in the group.

The summer of 1903 was not a good cabbage season. The drouth retarded the plants, which were practically a month late in being put into the ground. The outlook was so dismal that many farmers became discouraged and sowed their cabbage fields into other crops, greatly reducing the acreage. Mr. Mitchell noted these conditions in early spring and contracted for 110 acres of cabbage at from \$3.50 to \$4 per ton. During the summer he contracted for more and early in the fall, when cabbages for storage purposes were selling at from \$10 to \$14 per ton around Apulia Station, he bought extensively. Some of the cabbages thus purchased were shipped from the field, but the large majority was stored away in Mr. Mitchell's immense warehouses at Apulia Station. When these were pretty well filled and Mr. Mitchell had acquired a liberal portion of all the cabbage in his vicinity, he patiently waited for the market increase. "Bear" reports were common during the winter, frequently circulated by buyers anxious to depress prices. Importations of cabbages, Southern cabbages and the fact that thousands of tons had been put away awaiting higher prices, were some of the arguments used, but they did not influence Mr. Mitchell, who had his own ideas about the price cabbages were to touch. Not until they reached \$40 per ton at loading station did he begin to sell. For some of his stock he received over these figures, \$50 per ton for unusually choice stock being the highest reached. In all, Mr. Mitchell had 1,400 tons of cabbages stored in his warehouses. By shipping five car loads, or between sixty and seventy-five tons each of cabbages during the first week of March, 1904, Mr. Mitchell had pretty nearly cleaned up a big deal in cabbage, netting him a fortune conservatively estimated at \$40,000 and earned him the title of "Cabbage King."

Endowed with a spirit of enterprise, Mr. Mitchell began to reinvest his fortunes in Apulia Station and the surrounding community he now called home. On 20 June 1900, The Apulia Cemetery Association was formally incorporated with Alexander M. Mitchell being its first President. Under his devoted leadership, the Apulia Cemetery was completely renovated including the resetting of all the stones and markers, trimming of trees and removal of unwanted brush and weeds, and the erection of an appropriate iron fence of approximately 860 feet, out of respect for his mother, the 23 soldiers and other pioneer Fabius family members buried there. He purchased building lots and had plans prepared and put in the hands of builders for the erection of dwelling houses, etc. costing about \$12,000 (presumably along South Street in Apulia Station). Mr. Mitchell was president of the W H & Greene Chair Company of Apulia Station, and also a large stockholder, a director in the National Bank of Tully, NY and a director of the City Bank, and a large stockholder of the Picotte-Mitchell Company, tailors in Syracuse. He was also a very active member of the Apulia M E Church, and a beautiful stained glass window in the church bears his name.

Mr. Mitchell contracted D. Skeele & Son to build a beautiful Victorian style home on South Street for the Mitchell family. He purchased a store property, renamed Mitchell Hall, which he remodeled with a modern office on the first floor, in the rear of the building was a court room (for such proceedings as the local "Cooper Murder Trial") and the upper floor contained a spacious hall for community dances, entertainment, and group meetings. A structure on the west side of Mitchell Hall housed the scales for weighing incoming wagon loads of cabbage. On 26 July 1918, Mr. Mitchell installed a Delco electric lighting plant for the office and cabbage houses. A generating unit with storage batteries was located in the main building with wires running to the storehouses in the rear. The office was equipped with the indirect system of globes by which the entire room could be illuminated without the dazzling effect produced by unprotected lamp bulbs. Lighting the storehouses however was considered the greatest convenience, as the new plant banished forever lamps or lanterns with broken and smoky chimneys. In addition to his place of business, Mr. Mitchell had the Delco lighting outfit installed in his residence. A number were being installed on farms at that time, among those were Beth Smith and Howard Furlong of Fabius.

Mitchell Hall was the main office for the cabbage business, but the National touring car that was purchased in 1911 became the satellite office. He used this automobile to great advantage, driving through the country calling on various cabbage

growers. On 10 June 1912, while hastening to the railroad station in an effort to catch a train for Syracuse, Mr. Mitchell was struck by the DL&W train at June's Crossing, near Apulia Station, and it was necessary to amputate his left leg. His son, Frank, had been arrested for running down a man on S. Salina St. and Mr. Mitchell was headed for Apulia Station to catch a train for Syracuse. "Mr. Mitchell and his chauffeur, George Outt, were driving along at a fast rate of speed and just as they approached the crossing they heard the train. Mr. Mitchell urged the chauffeur to make the crossing ahead of the train. The machine had almost cleared the tracks when Mr. Mitchell saw that a collision was likely. He leaped from his seat and probably would have escaped unhurt, but his foot caught and he fell in the path of the locomotive. The pilot of the engine struck his left leg. When Mr. Mitchell jumped, Outt increased the speed of the auto and it landed unhurt in a field. He managed to get the car back in the road again and placing Mr. Mitchell in the car drove back to Apulia. Dr. J E Andrews of Fabius was summoned, as was Dr. E S Van Duyn of this city. The latter drove from this city to Apulia in his auto and amputated the leg." From that point on, Mr. Mitchell utilized a wooden leg.

In 1919 Mr. Mitchell retired from business and sold his holdings to a NYC produce company. According to the Eayetteville_Bulletin, 3 Sep. 1920: "Leonard F. Dorthey of Tully has purchased the cabbage business conducted at Apulia Station by A M Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell has bought cabbage there for twenty-seven years and is known as the "Cabbage King" of CNY. Failing health compelled him to sell."

A notice in the Syracuse Herald on 14 Apr. 1933 read:

A M MITCHELL CABBAGE KING LONG ILL, DIES. Alexander M. Mitchell, 75, of Apulia Station, known for many years as the "Cabbage King" of the United States, died at 8 o'clock last night at the home of friends in Syracuse. Mr. Mitchell had been in ill health for several months and had taken a sudden turn for the worse a few days ago. Mr. Mitchell is survived by his wife, Mary A. Mitchell, and a son, Frank M. Mitchell of NYC. The funeral service will be conducted at 2:30 o'clock Sunday afternoon at Apulia Station ME Church. Burial will be in Tully Cemetery.



Apulia Station, NY Sept 6th 1957 photo # 227-143 by Henry DeWolf 585 663-8231 Cabbage houses located in middle of photo between the creamery and the ME Church.

Additions to the Fabius Historical Society Collection in 2008

Transferred from Onondaga County:

Ideal Ginseng Garden booklet, 1945, Knapp Bros. and Sons Enos Pudney carpenter's ledger, 1845-50 and 1864-1866 Assortment of farm tools and household equipment, late 1800's – early 1900's

Private Donations:

Cheese press, cheese box, and water dipper from the Bernard Rowley property farmed by H. Duane Skeele – donated by Edward Skeele

Wooden flour keg, 20th century - donated by Leland Houck

Dr. Pine's Medicine bottle - donated by Patricia Bowen (photo at right)

No. 4 Universal Bread dough mixer - donated by Wayne Dow

Cardner cheese box factory letterhead, copies of family photographs and excerpts from

factory ledger - donated by Richard A. Cardner

Fluted Ovenex muffin tin used by Blanche Bryan - donated by Ruth Bryan

Cornell Extension Bulletins (4) from 1920's and 1940's - donated by Francis and Helen Nelson.



Enos Pudney, Fabius Carpenter

The business ledger of Enos Pudney was given to the Pioneer Museum in Highland Forest by Mr. and Mrs. George A. Lewis of Oran, NY, in 1959. Though technically still the property of Onondaga County, the ledger was transferred to the Fabius Historical Society on long term loan. The ledger is in remarkably good condition, but for optimum preservation, a photocopy has been made so anyone may safely view the handwritten entries. The entire ledger is also available electronically, thanks to the transcription work volunteered by Ginny Scida.

Enos Pudney was a carpenter and a farmer and the ledger provides fascinating glimpses of his work and economic transactions between 1845 -1850 and 1864 -1866. The ledger also documents that he also "tried" or was in attendance at lawsuits in Delphi, for which service he charged \$1.00.

The ledger records his dealings with 34 local clients and the transactions are in the form of cash, notes, labor, or produce. There is a wealth of information regarding the frequency and costs of various categories of labor, farm work, barn, shed and house construction and repair, sled and wagon repair, the sale of lumber and timber products, mill construction, and manufacture of farm equipment.

References to flax machines, cheese rooms and presses, a bleach box, and blacksmith shop identify other businesses in the community. There are also figures for house rent and the wages for agricultural labor or freight hauling that shed light on the local economics in Fabius during the mid 1800's.

For example, between March and August of 1849, Pudney spent 11 days in "carpenter work" or "joiner work" for Rawlin and Ira Crandall. He also sold them 14 bundles of oat straw at 25 cents and three pounds of butter for 38 cents, and an entry that reads "By three shilling by Alfonza to make change." The total indebtedness was \$17.00 and it was paid during the same period by a peck of lime at 25 cents a bushel, setting grafts in apple trees at 25 cents, by their oxen to drag one day for 62-1/2 cents, by helping mine lime with team for 19 cent, by "howing" com by Rawlin & Alfonze one day each for \$1.25 and then again for 44 cents; by "howing" com by Ira shillings worth for 37-1/2 cents; by ½ day haying at 50 cents; and lastly by \$13.31 paid in cash. (Please note that our transcriptions of the journal include the spelling as written by Enos, even when the spelling may not be grammatically correct by today's standards.)

If anyone else is interested in researching Pudney's business, please contact Lilita Bergs, Curator, to borrow a copy of the journal. 683-5191 or LBergs@twcny.rr.com.

COLLECTIONS POLICY

At the September 2008 Executive Committee meeting, the FHS approved the new Collections Policy. The policy was drafted by the Collections Committee composed of Lilita Bergs, Sandy Beglinger and Kate Cameron, following examples of such policies from other organizations. Such a policy is required when applying for a state charter and grant funding, for it documents the Society's intent and efforts in proper record keeping, research, and collections care for the objects entrusted to it. Copies were made available to the public at several FHS meetings. If someone else desires a copy, contact Lilita Bergs, Curator, at 683-5191 or LBergs@twcny.rr.com.