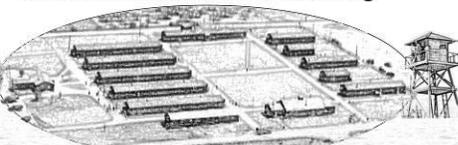


# FRIENDS OF HAMLIN BEACH STATE PARK

www.friendsofhamlinbeach.org



1 Camp Road Hamlin, NY 14464

www.nysparks.com

(585) 964-2462

**July 10, 2013**

Attendees: Dave Walch, Linda Rabjohn, Patti Sullivan (note taker), Eileen Preston, Nick Kramer, Don Rabjohn, Maryanne Hurlbutt, Ralph Preston, Jeanine Klopp, Jackie Galle, Bunnie Beardsley, Sherry Dobson, Park Manager Jay Bailey

## **IMPORTANT!**

**Next Meeting Date has been changed to Thursday, August 22, at 7:00**

### **Treasurer Report**

#### **Current Funds**

Restricted fund - grant	\$ 1,000.00
Unrestricted fund	<u>\$ 2,476.78</u>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ 3,476.78</b>

### **Dave Walch Thank You**

Dave Walch stepped down as President due to personal and professional obligations. The Friends group would like to extend a BIG HUG to Dave for all of his hard work over the years, supporting our group with his leadership, patience and kindness to all. Dave was one of the "Founding Fathers" of the Friends group.

### **July 6<sup>th</sup> Activities**

- From Eileen: I want to thank Ralph, Maryann, Jeanine, and Bunnie for helping at the guitar raffle, Saturday night, July 6th. We made \$251 and the winner was Robin Gill (she bought only one ticket). We all had an enjoyable evening listening to the band and making money for the Friends!
- The chicken wing winner was an 18 year old who ate 40 wings in about 12 minutes, 5 seconds. The second place winner finished in 32 minutes. The rest of the contestants couldn't finish all their wing! Prizes were gift certificates and T-Shirts. Thank you Mark's Pizzeria for running this fun event.
- People are again using the renovated horseshoe pits that were totally refurbished during I Love My Park Day. Visitors can borrow horseshoes from the Park Office.

### **Grants**

Eileen Preston has a grant that she would like help to come up with ideas for a capacity building grants. Jay mentioned another consolidated grant through the Finger Lakes Council that will allow us to be in the pool for over 30 grants. Several members will brainstorm ideas with Eileen.

### **Compliance Guidelines**

A Financial Guidelines form was handed out that all active members needs to sign. This will cover all fundraising so that we are in compliance with IRS and State tax laws. If we do not follow proper procedures we can be penalized and/or will not be eligible to apply for grants and could even lose our 501(c)3 status. Anyone that receives any kinds of donations needs to follow these guidelines and please sign the form. (Note: Eileen has already filed our taxes for 2012).

### **Ed's Update (via Nick Kramer)**

- Ed received a gift of \$50 from Larry Fague and Allen Pratt. Thank you!
- Ed is requesting we raise funds to purchase a tractor to help maintain the CCC camp. We need to get estimates and specifications. Nick will work with Ed to get us the specifications of what would work best. Patti will contact Lakeland Equipment in Clarkson, Lakeshore Luxuries in Hamlin, and MTE in Henrietta for quotes. Bunnie will help Patti with fund raising events.

Meeting adjourned 8:22

### **Go to our Facebook page, you don't need an account [www.facebook.com/FOHBSP](http://www.facebook.com/FOHBSP)**

Check out the great photos of the Purple Martin Banding at Gert's House. Scroll down a bit for two fun pictures of Ed and the Hamlin kids at the CCC/POW camp. Ed's description of the event is the second set of stories below.

### **Upcoming Events**

- August 3<sup>rd</sup> – Figure 8 classic rock music, 6:00, Area 3
- August 10<sup>th</sup> – Julie Dunlap & High Maintenance country music, 6:00, Area 3
- August 22<sup>nd</sup> Thursday – next FOHBSP meeting at 7:00
- August 24th – SUNY Brockport Service Day at Yanty Creek and CCC/POW Camp

**Next meeting:** Wednesday@ August 2th 7:00 (No Exec Board mtg unless notified)

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Below are two great articles that Ed sent to me.

### **Love Stories at the CCC/POW Camp**

The Town of Sweden has an ad in the Hamlin Clarkson Herald asking for war time love stories to help it celebrate its 200th birthday. That gave me an idea. Why not report on some war time love stories that took place in the Hamlin CCC and POW camp on Moscow Road?

When Heinrich first saw Hamlin, he was 20 years old. Fresh out of high school he had enlisted in the German Army and became a prisoner of war in North Africa two years later. He was in the first batch of German POWs to arrive in the Hamlin camp from Fort Niagara. That was June of 1944 and three years ago I waited anxiously for my first letter to arrive from Germany from him. I could hardly wait to finally find out where the barbed wire fence had been placed around the old CCC camp and the exact location of the guard towers!

When the letter came everything was about the women who worked in the Duffy Mott canning factory. Not a single word about the fence or the guard towers! (That information would have to wait until letter number 3!) Instead, Heinrich wrote, "The young women at the canning factory were very curious about us and we were very lonely. Soon they began to write their names on their uniforms in lipstick. Then they wrote their names on OUR uniforms in lipstick!" A little farther on he wrote, "I think Nellie was in love with me."

After a while he was transferred to the tomato fields (in Parma). I can only wonder why? But he went on to say that he eventually got his hands on an envelope and stole a US stamp (It was illegal for a POW to use the US Mail.) He wrote a letter to Nellie and bribed a guard to mail it. But Nellie never got it. It went straight to the Commandant of the Hamlin POW camp.

Heinrich was called before the Commandant and was told that he would be sent back to Fort Niagara to the "jail" there but before he could be processed for the trip, the Commandant changed his mind. He felt that "the Hamlin camp could do more for Heinrich than Fort Niagara could" and assigned him to permanent kitchen duty in the mess hall.

It wasn't long before Heinrich traded identities with a friend to work his buddy's night shift at the canning factory. A guard caught a glimpse of Heinrich and Nellie together from the walkway above a secluded area of the factory. They stood motionless for a while and the guard slowly walked away. Later that night, Heinrich passed the guard in a hallway. The guard just looked at Heinrich, shook his head, and continued on.

Heinrich went back to East Germany after the war and still lives there with his wife Renate. But his story has inspired me to try to find out what happened to Nellie. So far, no luck!

Then there was Marie. She was a 20 year old Hamlin girl who learned to speak German from her family. She worked at the Duffy Mott factory when the POWs arrived.

One of the POWs assigned to the Duffy Mott team as a crew leader needed an interpreter and Marie volunteered. They fell in love but when the war was over and the Hamlin POW camp closed in January of 1946, the Geneva Convention said he had to be sent back to where he had enlisted. Many of the German POWs did fill out the necessary paperwork to come back to America but Marie's boyfriend must have been returned to what became communist East Germany. The Russians wouldn't let anyone leave for any reason! Marie never saw him again.

But her POW boyfriend had painted a beautiful portrait of her while they worked together at the canning factory. On the back he wrote in very neat script, "To Marie With All My Love." She kept the painting until she passed away in 2007. Friends of hers recently turned the painting over to me and it will soon be on display in the Friends of the State Park's future farmhouse museum next to the CCC/POW campsite on Moscow Road.

George Lake couldn't wait for the war to get his love story in this collection. In the fall of 1936 twenty-one year old George enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) so that his Mom could get \$25 a month while he helped to build Hamlin Beach State Park. He lived in Medina and promised his girlfriend Hazel that he'd come home every weekend to visit her. He'd leave after work on Friday and head back to camp on Sunday.

Medina is not just down the road from Hamlin but sometimes he got a ride with someone who worked at the camp and sometimes he'd hitch-hike. Once he walked the entire way! He wore his shoes out and the bottoms fell off part half way back. When he finally arrived at camp, very late, he put on the tops of his shoes and laced them up so that no one would know what happened. Quite often George wouldn't make it back to camp on time and he'd be assigned a lot of extra K.P. duty. But George didn't mind. It was all worth it!

Many CCC enlistees signed up for several six month hitches of duty but after one hitch, George had spent enough time away from his true love. He went back to Medina and married Hazel. He passed away in 2003.

About three years ago when I arrived at the CCC campsite to clear away some more of the "jungle" that still covered the site, I saw a 92 year old woman wandering around the old parade ground. It was Hazel! Her daughter was helping her along. Under her arm Hazel had one of those long, skinny group photos taken with a special lens. It was folded in half along a heavy crease and she opened it up to show it to me. She pointed to George who was one of the crinkled up, unrecognizable faces on the crease.

She said she just wanted to walk where George had walked between the weekend visits to see her. I took her to the exact spot where George was standing when the photo was taken in the spring of 1937. Hazel came back to the camp with different family members two more times after that. I think she can give the tour without me now.

A little over a year ago, Hazel had the crinkled faces professionally repaired and also had a copy of the repaired photo made for me. It too will be on display in the future museum.

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## Hamlin Recreation Department Visit

The Hamlin Recreation Department organized a history outing as part of their summer program. On June 27, thirty-three kids, ages 6 to 12, left the Town Hall to visit Hamlin's History Center and the old CCC/POW campsite on Moscow Road. For the convenience of the tour givers, the group was split in two. While the 9 to 12 year olds visited the CCC/POW site the 6 to 8 year olds were at the History Center. Then the bus switched the locations of the two groups.

I don't know what happened at the History Center but I had a delightful experience with the kids at the CCC/POW site! It was a joy for this retired high school teacher to witness the energy and genuine enthusiasm exuded by these young people as they learned about something they knew very little about before they got on that bus.

I thought it was going to be difficult getting the kid's to think about a time as long ago as 1935. But I asked the kids to picture in their minds what their father looked like. (Some kids closed their eyes.) Then I asked them if they knew what their father's father looked like. Concentrate on him, I said. They nodded their heads. Now, I said, try to imagine what your father's father's father looked like.

That was a stumper for most kids but I told them that there was such a guy and I wanted them to pretend, for now, that they were their father's father's, father at age 18, and the year is 1935. I told them what life in and around Hamlin was like back then. No TV, no computers, no cell phones, no fast foods, and no shopping malls. It was rare to have a shower in homes, most roads were dirt, telephones were huge and a very large radio was the home entertainment center. And there were black and white, one hour long movies at single screen theaters - mostly cowboys for kids. Tickets were 10 cents and popcorn was considered overpriced at 5 cents a bag.

Then I told them about the great depression that was going on in 1935 and that 1/4 of all the adults they knew were without a job. There were no food stamps but I told them about FDR's plan to have young men build parks and plant trees for \$1 a day. Their moms got \$25 a month and the young men got \$5 plus a camp like the one they were here to see to live in. "Pretend that you, your father's father's father, signed up for the program."

I passed out a five page packet with an aerial photo of what the Hamlin camp looked like in 1938 on the cover. They agreed that it kind of looked like a little village. Then I held up a huge, styrofoam backed copy of the same photo. A little short fella immediately lunged forward and said, "We're right here," and he pointed to the exact spot. I was impressed! He had sneaked a peek at our kiosk when I wasn't looking and figured things out for himself.

I reminded them that they were their father's father's father and pointed to the spots on the big photo where they slept, ate, and played ping pong. This was one of over 4000 of FDR's camps and 200 different young men every six months got to live here while they built Hamlin Beach State Park. We were standing next to the place where the recreation building stood and now the rope that traced the outline of the missing building made some sense. From there we began our walk around the camp that was now kind of a ghost town.

At the first stop, I held up a photo of five CCC guys and pointed to 5 short flags in the ground a short distance away. I told them that the guys in the picture were standing where the flags are now when the picture was taken almost 70 years ago. One kid noticed all the trees on the present site that were not in the photo. Without being asked to, they looked for other things in the picture that were different from the present view. When I do the tour for adults, I have to assume that my audience is following me but these kids left no doubt. The youngest group even raced to the flags and wanted to match each flag up with each of the five guys in the photo!

We finished walking around the recreation building, stopping now and then to show them photos of how it used to look to their father's father's father, inside and out. I held up one picture that showed the building filled to capacity with people who used the building after the CCC boys left and before the German prisoners arrived. "Wow, 159 people," one little girl said. I generally have to tell that to adults that take the tour but these kids read the small print beneath the photo first and THEN looked at the picture! This definitely was a different kind of crowd!

I explained about the conversion of the CCC camp to a prisoner of war camp and showed them a coil of barbed wire that was left behind. "Oooh, don't touch it," one fella said. "You'll get a shock." I grabbed it and pointed to the barbs. Obviously, the boy had never seen barbed wire up close and thought all fences were electrified.

I described the POW fence that used to be there and showed them a picture I have of a look alike fence that stood in the POW camp at Oakfield NY. Ten miles of wire went into our fence and it was 33 strands high. The entire bottom strand was still here in the ground where the army said it had to be. We were standing next to the actual corner of the Hamlin POW fence and the kids cleared the dead leaves away from the rotted 4x4 corner post that was still there in the ground after 70 years. I am sure they would have dug up the entire, still buried strand of wire of wire with their bare hands if I had asked them to.

These kids also asked questions as fast as they entered their heads. One little thinker with only a comic book perception of a barbed wire stockade just had to know why the German prisoners of war never tried to cut through or climb over the fence. I told him they didn't want to but that wasn't enough. So I tried to explain the strange kind of understanding that had developed between the POWs and the Hamlin citizens. They actually needed each other. That coupled with the fact that the POWs really had no place to go, they were no longer ducking bullets, and they were eating better than they had in a long time made them feel fortunate to be here. The look on his face told me the little thinker was beginning to understand and I wished I had had the time to tell him some of the human interest stories that grew out of the POWs stay here. But there just wasn't time.

From time to time I'd ask a kid to stand and pose in a spot to act out a photo I was holding up. Kids seem to enjoy role playing and one fella made it look like he was holding a shovel in his right hand. The photo showed a cement slab behind him and thanks to his acting, I had the rest of the group's attention while I explained what else the photo showed. At other times, I lost the crowd to wild cherry tasting, picking pretty flowers, catching spiders, and looking down woodchuck holes until I plunked down something more interesting for them to concentrate on. Like the photo of the CCC camp deer being attended to by the assistant manager of the camp.

I threw the deer photo onto the ground exactly where the deer was standing when the picture was taken in 1938. I told them the deer was a fawn rescued and raised by the CCC boys. I asked them to guess what the deer's favorite food was. All kinds of suggestions were made but I finally had to tell them - cigarettes! Immediately, a little girl wanted to know what happened to the deer. I assured her it did not die from the cigarettes but told her that I too thought that cigarettes were a bad thing to teach a deer to eat. I assured her that the deer eventually wandered off and they never saw it again.

When we passed a solar panel the kids wanted to know why it was there. I pointed to the flag we had placed exactly where the original one was in the photo they carried. I explained that it was improper to fly an American flag at night if it is not lighted. A friend of ours donated the solar panel, battery and light because we didn't have anyone to take the flag down every night. A little flag etiquette thrown into the tour didn't hurt!

I showed a photo of three young CCC men standing in front of another building and asked them to look at the boy in the middle. The building used to be right in front of us. They all stepped closer to squint at the picture. I said that their father's father's father had to be between 17 and 25 to get into the camp. "How old does the boy in the middle look?"

One kid said, "About 11." I pointed to another kid and said, "He looks about your age. How old are you?" The answer was 12.

I then explained that many of the CCC men were under aged boys just like him and that their families had told little white lies to get the under aged boys signed up. Every one of my audience had their eyes glued to me as I explained how important that \$1 per day was to families and how proud it made some 13 year olds feel to be supporting their families with the work they did in this camp. That cut down on the flower picking and spider chasing for the next couple of stops.

At the mess hall site I decided to try an experiment. After showing photos of the inside and outside of the building that used to be there, the rope outlining the perimeter of what was once there aided in explaining the magnificence the old "cafeteria." I pointed to where the three huge old fashioned cook stoves used to sit and asked if anyone ever saw a piece of coal. A few kids had and I explained to all that it is a rock that burns and it was used in the stoves to cook the CCC and POW food. In fact, I said, the coal pile was still over there, and I pointed to it. Then I told them I wanted them to have a souvenir of the days tour.

I gave each kid a 1 inch by 2 inch plastic bag and told them to go get a piece of coal to take home with them. The word "stampede" almost describes what followed! The entire group immediately covered the weedy black mound about 50 feet away. Some kids couldn't decide which piece to claim and they talked it over with those doing the search next to them. Some sneaked more than one piece and some adhered to the "one piece" rule. Some dumped out the little bag and started over. [I realize that I can't do this every time I give a tour to kids but when I saw their enthusiasm I decided then and there that I would buy a bucket of coal next time and use that.]

We checked out the barracks sites after that. My photos kept their interest even though some new bugs and tiny flowers had been collected and added to the bags of coal along the way. At the Barracks #3 site I pointed out the exact spot where Heinrich Willert used to sleep. I showed photos of Heinrich when he was a 10 year old, when he was inducted into the German Army, and another of him as a POW here in the United States. I am sure I could have gotten a Hamlin Rec kid to lie down and have his picture taken pretending to be sleeping on Heinrich's cot. But I'll save that until next time and send the photo to Heinrich.

Near the end of the tour I took the kids to the site of a building that had a cement floor. It used to be the latrine and one kid in the two groups knew that the word meant "bathroom." I showed them where the showers and sinks used to be and then I jumped into the 20 foot long, 3 foot wide, 3 feet deep, cement, toilet trench. That got their attention! The kids circled the trench and listened as I explained about the "8 toilet seats on this side" and 8 more toilet seats on the other side. Before I was through, the kids wanted to jump into the trench too. They wouldn't take "no" for an answer so I let them. One kid wanted to have his picture taken standing in the trench so we obliged him. After the kids had had their fun, one of the Recreation Staff, trying to sound like a lifeguard, yelled "Okay, everyone out of the toilet," and we finished the tour.