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After a two-year hiatus, the Summer Harvest Festival returned on August 20. Over 175 visitors enjoyed musicians, artists and Farmers Market vendors.

**BUTTERNUT
VALLEY
ALLIANCE**

*The BVA is a 501(c)(3)
that serves the communities
within the watershed of the
Butternut Creek*

THE CURRENT

Summer
2022

Connecting and Sustaining the Butternut Creek Watershed

Our Roots Run Deep

As an organization whose mission includes protecting the environment in the Butternut Valley watershed,

Butternut Valley Alliance promotes projects that improve stream health such as the planting of young trees along the creek to create buffers that help shade and protect the stream from pollution. (Join us for our buffer maintenance event September 24.) While it's the above-ground part of trees and shrubs that we notice and admire, a large part of the benefit of buffers occurs underground where the roots knit together and hold the soil, preventing stream-bank erosion.

Another part of BVA's mission is to connect communities and interconnected roots are integral here as well. The political activist Marcus Garvey made a similar connection when he said, "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots."

As a resident of the valley with family roots that go back more than 100 years, I feel a connection to our land and our history. I love that the Gilbertsville Eagle Fire Engine and Hose Company named their newest fire truck "Big Mike" in memory of my great uncle who put in over 50 years as a volunteer. I get a special kick hearing old-timers tell me stories of how my Great Grandmother birthed them at home seventy plus years ago because the village doctor couldn't make it in time. And while I feel very lucky indeed to have such rich and interconnected roots, this history also reminds me that a century ago it was my family who were the newcomers to the area. I don't know whether they were considered outsiders at the time or were welcomed into the local community, but it serves as a reminder that we were all foreigners to this land at one time. It informs how I want to treat people who are new to the area.

This issue of *The Current* centers around the theme of local history and our connection to the past. We feature a story about local ties to the Civil War by Glen Noto and a story by Bob Thomas about noted school teacher Benjamin Gardner. Also in this issue, learn how Visionary Scholar Award recipient Monica Kennedy highlighted this same connection with her winning submission. "We must grasp the past in order to succeed in the present and plan for the future," Monica wrote.

Folks wanting to learn more about the history of our area should mark your calendars for October 19 when we will offer a second presentation about the history of local mills.

Michele Farwell

Michele Farwell
Executive Director, BVA

History cannot give us a program for the future, but it can give us a fuller understanding of ourselves, and of our common humanity, so that we can better face the future. Robert Penn Warren

by Glen Noto, photos by Bob Thomas

They Answered the Call

Local Impact of the Civil War is Preserved Throughout the Valley

“The lightning had scarcely flashed the intelligence to the expectant north that Maj. Anderson and his gallant band had surrendered ... and that Sumter was in possession of the Southern Confederacy, ergo the patriotic sons of old Otsego were rallying to the support of their imperiled country ...” Thus opens “Otsego County in the Rebellion,” a chapter in the *1878 History of Otsego County, 1740-1878*. What the authors said in general about the response of Otsego County to the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861 applied specifically to the Butternut Valley as well. According to this classic work, almost 500 men of the Butternut Valley served in the Union Army or Navy during the Civil War. At least 137 were casualties, a casualty rate over 25%. Of these, 86 never returned home having died on battlefields, in hospitals from their mortal wounds or disease, or in places like Andersonville as prisoners of war.

The record of the men of the Butternut Valley was indeed both heroic and tragic. Beginning in 1861, men rushed to enlist in New York Volunteer Infantry, Cavalry or Artillery Regiments,

including units like the 2nd NY Heavy Artillery and the 8th NYV Cavalry, among others. In the summer of 1862, men from Burlington, Butternuts, Morris and New Lisbon once again responded to Abraham Lincoln’s call for 300,000 more volunteers by enlisting in large numbers in regiments that saw heavy combat compiling outstanding records like the 121st and 152nd NYV Infantry.

A leisurely car ride, or perhaps a more vigorous bike ride, on Route 51 from Mount Upton through Gilbertsville, Morris, New Lisbon, Garrattsville and on to Burlington will reveal the legacy of those in the Valley. In both Gilbertsville and Morris, citizens raised money to commission, erect and dedicate monuments to local soldiers and sailors. The Soldiers’ Monument in Morris’ Hillington Cemetery lists the names of Morris soldiers who did not survive the war. Cemeteries up and down the valley, large and small, contain the graves of dozens of Valley veterans.

Many of the graves are indicated with a G.A.R. grave marker, signifying membership in the veteran’s organization, the Grand Army of the Republic. Many inscriptions proudly include the veteran’s rank and the regiment in which the soldier served. Some of the grave-stones are of soldiers who were killed in battle, such as the one in Butternut Valley Cemetery in Burlington on County Route 16 where you can see the grave of Sergeant Horatio G. Whitford of the 121st NYV. Whitford was killed in action in May 1863 at Salem Church during the Battle of Chancellorsville. Whitford’s death in this battle was only one of dozens in the regiment in general and in the Butternut Valley as well. According to Isaac O. Best in his *History of the 121st New York State Infantry* (1921), out of the 453 men who entered the fight



The Soldiers’ Monument in Hillington Cemetery, Morris.

the regiment suffered 278 casualties; 125 of the casualties were killed or mortally wounded. Historian Stephen W. Sears in his 1996 monograph, *Chancellorsville*, writes, “In an all too common scene in this war, the hamlet of Garrattsville in central New York State, where the 121st was recruited, mourned the loss of fifteen of its young men killed in these few hours at Salem Church.” As Lieutenant Lansing B. Paine of New Lisbon wrote to his parents from “near the Heights of Fredericksburg” on May 4, 1863 the day



Top portion of the Gilbertsville monument at the intersection of Bloom and Spring streets.

after this battle, “Yesterday was a sad day for the boys of the 121st.”

Participation was not limited to young men serving in uniform: older men served on war committees and purchased war bonds for the relief of the families of volunteers, women helped raise money or served in Women’s Central Relief Associations or made items for sick and wounded soldiers.

Residents of the Valley were proud of the service and sacrifices of their neighbors. In the *1878 History of Otsego County from 1740 to 1878* an entire chapter is devoted to “Otsego in the Rebellion.” In every town profile in this work, a significant amount of text chronicles the town’s

record in the Civil War, narrating its battle and service experience, including a list of every townsman who served. Citizens erected monuments, at no inconsiderable cost, to honor those who answered their country’s call. The beautiful monument in Gilbertsville, in its simplicity, honors the devotion of their veterans, and indeed of all who answered the call throughout the Valley. The inscription, “In memory of the defenders of our country” was rededicated in 1987 with the words “Dedicated to the residents of the Town of Butternuts to commemorate their dedication to God, country and community.” Take a ride and examine this rich heritage of the Butternut Valley.

by Bob Thomas

Gardner Name Dots the Valley

When driving around the Butternut Valley, one may be struck by the frequency of encountering the same name. For instance, in New Lisbon there is a Gardnertown Rd. and a Gardner Family cemetery shares a border with Gilbert Lake State Park. A quick search of the *Morris Chronicle* yields 3,331 times when the name appears in its pages. Otsego County tax roles show 22 properties held by people named Gardner.

One Gardner is of particular interest. Benjamin C. Gardner was born in the year without a summer, 1816, on a farm on Loren Wheat Rd. in New Lisbon. He was the only son of Jonathan and Hannah Gardner who had come to New Lisbon from Vermont. He eventually took over the farm and worked it in season until he died there in 1897. During the winter when the farm rested Benjamin was successful at another profession. For 59 years he was an educator spending most of those years as a teacher in one-room schools. He changed schools almost yearly. He liked to take on schools



Buck Schoolhouse in New Lisbon where Gardner first taught. Photo courtesy of Ginny Schoradt.

that were in difficulty, thinking that he could make the biggest difference there. And he was happy to take the higher pay that the trustees were willing to pay to get a teacher who could turn things around. He also served a few years as commissioner of schools for Otsego County.

He taught in Louisville, later renamed Morris, where he had 100 pupils from the village. When a person from outside the village asked permission to send two of his children to the school, the trustee’s answer was, “If the man can teach 100 pupils, he can teach 102.” There are many other stories from his long career. You can read Benjamin C. Gardner’s account in a series of articles collected from the *Morris Chronicle* and available at our website.

For more on Gardner and other notable names in the Valley, visit ourtown-news.info/morris-ny.

On the Trail of Art

With the beautiful Basswood Pond as a background, BVA hosted its second annual outdoor art festival June 11-12 at Basswood Pond State Forest. Designed to promote local talent and to connect residents with each other and with their natural resources, the event drew over



A fishing frog painted by MCS student Jeffrey Bourgeois welcomed visitors to the trail. Photo by Michele Farwell.

225 attendees who enjoyed artwork by local students and area artists exhibited in an outdoor gallery.

Nearly 150 student art pieces were on display. Building on the success of last year’s event, participation was extended to a third school. Students from Edmeston Central school’s after-school program joined Gilbertsville-Mount Upton and Morris Central School art-class students. Over 20 area adult artists exhibited works as well including sculptures, stained glass pieces, paintings and found art created with forest materials.



Lt. Paine of New Lisbon served with the 121st at Salem Church where 15 men from Garrattsville lost their lives.

And the Winner Is ... Visionary Scholar Awarded

Congratulations are in order for BVA's 2022 Visionary Scholar Award winner Monica Kennedy for her submission titled "Reach for Yore Memories." Monica, a 2022 graduate homeschooled in Mt. Vision, New York, plans to attend Wyoming Catholic College in the fall. She submitted a charcoal drawing of her grandmother's hand passing a bouquet of flowers to her own outreached

hand. "In this image of my hand, I reach for the strength of the past in my grandmother's hand. The receiving of the flowers represents the passing of knowledge of farming from generation to generation," wrote Kennedy.

Monica's drawing also received Grand Prize in Fenimore Art Museum's Young at Art Regional Youth Art Contest in June.

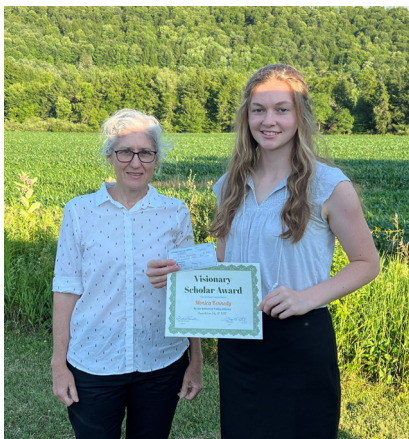
The Butternut Valley Alliance Visionary Scholar Award of \$500 for continuing education of any kind is offered each year to a high school senior who submits a winning vision of what the Butternut Valley watershed could be like twenty years from now. Students can use any medium that best communicates their concept such as poetry, essay or art.

This year's runner-up recipient is MCS graduate Mackenzie Graves for a slideshow presentation entitled "Our Home, Our Butternut." Mackenzie's presentation detailed ways she envisions "our community working together to



make the Butternut a safer, healthier, and cleaner environment." MCS graduates Ruby Jones and Etain LaLonde received honorable mentions, both for paintings depicting a vision for the Butternut Creek. The submissions were on display at the Summer Harvest Festival.

In 2019, a fund in memory of Ben-Ami Friedman, one of the BVA founders, was created for the annual Visionary Scholar Award. The goal of this award is to spark intergenerational, community-wide conversations about the civic, economic, agricultural, environmental and creative actions that emerge from our winner's vision for the future of our watershed.



Monica Kennedy, BVA's 2022 VSA winner, receives her award from Executive Director Michele Farwell.

How You Can Help the BVA Mission

Our annual meeting is open to the public. We welcome community participation to guide us in our continued efforts to make our valley an even better place to live, work and play. Please join us November 12 (watch our website for time and location).

BVA is doing good work in the Butternut Valley for us, for our children and for our children's children. But we can't do it alone. It takes many hands to host the events and programs we offer – from setting up chairs to planting trees. Please contact us at bva.exec@gmail.com to be added to our volunteer list.

We also welcome suggestions for articles for our newsletters and are seeking contributors as well. Contact the Editor at bva.exec@gmail.com with your ideas.

You can also help maintain the pace of our work with the support of your generous donation. Donations small or large to BVA go a long way and can be made by check or online at our website.

Invite your friends to become members. Membership fees help us continue our work and expand our reach. Membership allows you to attend monthly meetings and to vote in the annual election. Seats

are open on the board. If you are interested in running, please contact bva.exec@gmail.com.

Your Neighbors, Our Board

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