



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
January-February 2015 • Vol. 19 No. 1

On a Winter's Night, All the Ice Came Down (1916)

In mid-winter, large white icicles, tens of feet long hang from the Indian Ladder cliffs. Some even form great continuous columns of ice, supported at their base by volcano-like ice formations. One night in the winter of 1916, in Thacher Park's second year, a great shaking brought much of the ice tumbling down.

The first superintendent of Thacher Park was, fittingly, a geologist. You can read John Cook's writings on the caves and glacial history of the Helderbergs and broader region.

Recently historian Tim Albright came across a geologically curious paragraph from John Cook's monthly report for February 1916. *"An earth-quake of sufficient violence to break off all the larger icicles descending from the cliff-edge was experienced on the night of Feb. 2nd but so far as a hasty and superficial examination showed, no rock masses were loosened."*

Some of you are aware that miles beneath the Helderbergs, the rocks occasionally shift, generating earthquakes. All of these "tremblors" we know of have been small (from less than 1 to 3.1 Magnitude), and occurred 3-15 miles below the surface. Surprisingly, over 90 of these small earthquakes have been recorded by seismometers since 1980, most of them too small to be felt. Small or not, the Helderbergs are one of the more "seismically active" locales in New York State.

As a geologist at the New York State Museum who lives in the Helderbergs, these earthquakes catch

my attention. John Cook's report of the Feb. 1916 quake left me wondering – could this mark the occurrence of an older Helderberg earthquake?

I contacted seismologists at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, who looked into the older records. John Cook's 1916 earthquake was not in the Helderbergs. Felt widely through the Capital District-Saratoga region, this event was named the Schenectady Earthquake. The next day the New York Times reported shaking houses, broken windows, and shifting furniture, for 25 miles around. No major damage was reported, but at General Electric in Schenectady, the shaking was so vigorous that it was initially thought to be an explosion in the plant.

The Lamont-Doherty records show that on the night of February 2, 1916, there were two quakes in quick succession, at about 11:25p.m. They occurred at an unknown depth, roughly between Schenectady and Ballston Spa. The estimated magnitude of the larger of the two was 3.8. A known fault runs through that area, from the east Adirondacks through Saratoga and Schenectady, approaching the Helderbergs – where it's never been found.

And so the mystery of John Cook's winter icefall event is solved. One more geological story from Thacher Park, one of New York's geological gems.

**-by Dr. Chuck Ver Straeten
Geologist, New York State Museum**



Restoration of Knox School #5 is Complete

The Kiwanis Club of the Helderbergs has completed restoration of a one-room schoolhouse (School #5) in Knox, NY. Located on the grounds of the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center, the schoolhouse was built in the late 1890's. The schoolhouse is owned by New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and was restored under the guidance of Parks' Historic Sites Restoration Office. The building is now on the National Register of Historic Places.



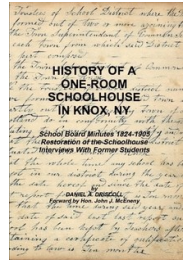
Pauline Williman and Fred Schroeder in the one-room schoolhouse

A member of the Kiwanis Club, Pauline Williman, attended the school in the 1930's. Her recollections, and those of several other former School #5 students, provided details about the school that were helpful during the restoration. For example, the students were occasionally asked to apply linseed oil to the Douglas fir flooring. Several of the teachers in the early 1900's lived with Pauline's family, so she was able to provide interesting details about the teachers. The photo above shows Pauline in the restored schoolhouse, along with Fred Schroeder, a former member of the Friends of Thacher State Park, who urged that the schoolhouse be restored.

The foundation, sill plates and floor joists were in such bad shape that the building had to be jacked-up so the foundation could be rebuilt. One Kiwanis member, the late Rudy Stempel, owned a saw-mill and was able to provide custom sill plates and floor joists. The photo below shows two more Kiwanis members, John Elberfeld and Homer Warner, standing before the schoolhouse, getting ready to do some final interior restoration.

To complete the project, we have now produced a book about the schoolhouse. The book, "History of a One-room Schoolhouse in Knox, NY", includes information about the restoration and a summary of interviews with former students. The book, written by Dan Driscoll with a forward by Jack McEneny, includes a transcript of School Board minutes for School District #5 from 1824 thru 1905 along with a description of contemporary historic events (such as the Anti-rent Wars) to provide context. Copies of the book can be purchased on-line from Lulu.com; proceeds go to Friends of Thacher State Park.

-by Dan Driscoll



John Elberfeld and Homer Warner in front of the nearly finished one-room schoolhouse.

Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

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As always, call 872-0800 or 872-1237 to verify activity times and dates.

Please feel free to call any board member with questions or suggestions.

Many thanks to Dr. Chuck Ver Straeten, Dan Driscoll, Bonnie Schaller, Joy Scism and Nancy Engel for their contributions to this newsletter, and to Rodger Fink, webmaster.

Want to contribute? Please email me at cgervasi@albany.edu
Christine Gervasi—Editor



Friends of Thacher Park Member Form

Member benefits: Newsletter, Scheduled Events Calendar & 10% Discount at the Nature Center Gift Shop. Renewal date follows name on address label.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell _____ Email _____

☐ I'd like to become a member of the Friends of Thacher Park. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.

☐ I am renewing my membership. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.

☐ Individual \$20

☐ Supporter \$40

☐ Donation \$ _____

☐ Family \$25

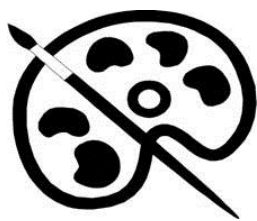
☐ Corporate \$100

☐ Senior (62) \$5

☐ Student \$5

☐ Benefactor \$100

Please make checks payable to the **Friends of Thacher Park** and send to Bonnie Schaller, 6324 Hawes Rd, Altamont, NY 12009. For more info: bschaller@nycap.rr.com



A Call For Artists!

We are looking for artists who are interested in displaying their work at the Annual Nature Art Exhibit at the Thacher Nature Center.

*Opening day and reception are on March 7.
Exhibit runs through March 28.*

Artwork must be nature inspired. Amateur and professional work will be considered.

Please call Joy at the park office at 872-1237.

Ice Fishing Contest at Thompson's Lake

Saturday, January 31, 6am - 1pm

Registration opens at 5:30am, fishing and fish measurement will take place from 6am - 1pm.

Registration fee is \$10 per person, children under 12 fish free.

Please call 518-872-1237 or 518-872-0800 for additional information and to check ice conditions.



A fabulous Thacher Park and the Centennial exhibit is tucked into

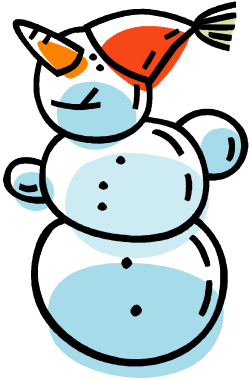
The New Scotland Historical Association Museum

Located at the Wyman Osterhout Community Center, 7 Old New Salem Rd., New Salem, NY, the museum is packed with maps, photos, memorabilia and all things Thacher Park and its surrounding area. From Bouckware to Centennial Celebration photos there is a tidy collection that everyone should take in.

Admission is free, hours are Sunday- ONLY 2 - 4pm

This exhibit runs to March 2015 -by Bonnie Schaller

Friends of Thacher Park
c/o Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center
87 Nature Center Way
Voorheesville, New York 12186-2601



Next:

Wednesday, January 14, 2015
Board Meeting
7:00 pm at the Thacher Nature Center



School Bus Fund Drive 2014 - 2015

The Friends of Thacher have once again shown that our school children are number ONE in their hearts. As of December 21, 2014, you have donated \$2,355, enough to fill 9 school buses! In these days of reduced budgets for field trips, your donation makes all the difference in the world.



Thank You!

If you missed your chance to help bring children to the park please consider a donation. \$5 will put a child on a bus to learn of the natural world and area history.

\$5	_____	One Child
\$10	_____	Two Children
\$50	_____	Ten Children
\$250	_____	Fills a Bus
	_____	Other

Please make checks payable to:

Friends of Thacher State Park
87 Nature Center Way,
Voorheesville, NY 12186

The Friends of Thacher Park is a 501©3 not for profit organization - all donations are tax deductible. All monies collected go to the drive - there are no administrative costs.

-Bonnie Schaller for Friends of Thacher Park

As always, you can find a color version of the newsletter at www.friendsofthacherpark.org/pages/news.html