



# Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186  
March—April 2014 • Vol. 18 No. 2

## *Jerry's Cave in John Boyd Thacher State Park How and when it got its name*

- by David McCann

In September of 2014 Thacher Park will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Likewise, in September 2014 Paul D. McCann, my father, would have celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday if he had he not passed away in 2008 at the age of 94.

In July 2002, six years before he died, my father shared with his children his recollections of life in Thacher Park in the 1920s and in particular how Jerry's Cave, located on the Upper Bear Path, got its name and who were the people responsible for naming it. Some of his fondest memories of growing up as pre-teen and teenager were summers at the Ketcham's place.

According to my father, he and his parents and his sister Anne, vacationed each August at the Ketcham Farm, located just to the north of Thacher Park and within easy walking distance of it. In addition to his family there would normally be about 10 or 12 other boarders at the Farm during the month of August.

In 1924 the other boarders included my father's cousin Margaret Crowley and her mother from Brooklyn, Bill Cunningham from New Jersey, and three sisters also from New Jersey—Ruth Liekert, Geraldine Liekert, and Anita Liekert. Margaret was about 19 years old at the time, Bill was 25, Ruth about 28, Geraldine about 23, and Anita about 16. There were two or three other sisters whose names had been forgotten by my father.

The relatively youthful, and not so youthful, boarders considered themselves to be amateur spelunkers because they explored Hailes Cave at some length as well as a few other smaller caves in the general area. In walking along what is now the Indian Ladder Trail the group from Ketcham's Farm noticed a rectangular opening in the side of the escarpment that just had to be further checked out. To gain access the boarders returned to the Farm and borrowed a ladder. Early the next day they all set out to explore the cave that could not easily be reached without the use of the ladder.

Entering the opening from the ladder was fairly easy. My father's best recollection (now almost 80 years after the fact) is that the explorers walked in a few paces, then turned left, then right, then left again at which point it was impossible to proceed further because the floor fell away to a depth of several feet. That concluded the exploration for the day but the spelunkers felt that the cave needed to have a name. Geraldine Liekert was everyone's favorite and it was agreed the cave should henceforth be known as Jerry's Cave. The next day, with paint and a brush supplied by Egbert Ketcham, the group returned to the cave and proceeded to paint the name "Jerry's Cave" just below the entrance to it. Incidentally, Geraldine Liekert and Bill Cunningham were married a few months later.

Time and weather have obliterated the Jerry's Cave inscription of 1924; however, that is what the cave was called by locals and visitors during the Roaring Twenties, the years of the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the war years following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Perhaps, some old timers can recall Jerry's Cave but have no idea how it came to be called that. Well, "Now they know the rest of the story."

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In one of the 1924 pictures shown below are the three Liekert sisters. Anita is on the left, Ruth is in the center and Geraldine is on the right. The second 1924 picture, taken on a very sunny day, shows my father's cousin Margaret Crowley at the entrance to Jerry's Cave as it first appeared 90 years ago.



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In March 1932, my father, now seventeen years old, was enjoying an Easter vacation in the neighborhood of the Indian Ladder Trail. However, he and 4 of his friends were trapped by an unexpected blizzard and forced to spend the night in a bare Lean-To. They were rescued the following day by the New Salem local justice of the peace. Shown below is the story of this adventure as it appeared in the Albany Evening News on March 20, 1932. The headlines essentially tell the story.



## Updates from the Park

### 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATURE ART EXHIBIT

— **GREAT ART CLASSES, TOO!!** - by Joy Scism

**Everyone is welcome! The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Nature Art Exhibit promises to be the best yet!**

**RECEPTION ON MARCH 8, 1 – 4 PM.** Meet old and new friends alike: artists and artisans, friends, family and neighbors – all are invited! The festivities include live music and refreshments. This year's exhibit features the work of greater than 50 artists, exhibiting in total between 125 – 140 pieces of artwork, from watercolors to oils to fiber to wood to photography and everywhere in between. If you want to meet the artists, the reception would be the place to do it. But, if you miss it, you can still see the beautiful artwork on display at the Nature Center from March 9 – 28. Each year, patrons may cast their votes for their favorite artist or piece of art work. Any time during the reception or the duration of the exhibit, come and cast your vote. As always, 3 People's Choice Awards will be given out this year.

**During the exhibit, we will be presenting 4 art classes where you can create your own masterpiece:**

**March 9, Wet on Wet Oil Painting. 10 am – 3 pm.**

**Instructor: Amy Anderson.** Learn the skills involved in creating a Wet-on-Wet Landscape. Each student will go home with a finished piece. No experience is necessary but previous artistic experience is helpful. Fee: \$50. Instructor supplies materials unless otherwise requested. Recommended for ages 16 and up. **Please call 872-1237 to register.**

**March 15. Sketching in Nature With Pen & Ink with Watercolor. 10 am – 1 pm. Instructor Jean Mackay.** Learn how to combine pen and ink with watercolor to enliven your nature sketches and sharpen your observation skills. Get or stay inspired by learning new techniques and exploring versatile, portable art materials. We'll work indoors, and you'll be ready to sketch outside soon. Some drawing experience helpful. Bring your favorite pens and a small set of watercolors; instructor will supply paper. Materials suggestions provided upon registering. Fee: \$25.00. **Call 872-1237 to register /materials list.**

**Sunday, March 16. Intro to SoulCollage®. 1 – 4 pm.**

**Instructor: Carol Coogan.** During this workshop you will receive an overview of making SoulCollage® cards. Using images, scissors, glue, and mat board, you will make your own SoulCollage® card(s) by pasting/collaging 1 or more of the images onto a 5x8 inch card. Select images that you are strongly attracted to or inspire you. Each card represents a single aspect of your Self. Share your thoughts with the group if you like. ALL card making materials will be supplied. If you have specific images that you'd like to use or can share with class, please feel free to bring them. Appropriate for age 14 through adult. Fee: \$25.00. **Call 872-1237 to register.**

**Saturday, March 22, Pine Needle Basket Class. 9:30 am – 3:30 pm. Instructor: Anita Wahlen.**

Using Southern Longleaf Pine needles, participants will make a basket using the coiling technique of Native American basket makers. A brief history of collection and preparation of materials will also be presented. Participants should bring embroidery scissors if available and a towel. Appropriate for ages 14 and up. Class fee: \$35.00 plus \$6.00 materials fee. **Call 872-1237 to register.**

Check for updates at [www.friendsofthacherpark.org](http://www.friendsofthacherpark.org)

#### Officers of the Friends Board of Trustees

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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 David McCann, Joy Scism, Bert Schou, Bonnie Schaller, Laurel Tormey-Cole and Sigrin Newell for their contributions to this newsletter, and to Rodger Fink, webmaster.



## Looking for our Friends of Thacher Park Member Form?

Please go to [www.friendsofthacherpark.org](http://www.friendsofthacherpark.org)

### **Ice Safety** - by Bert Schou

Recreational fun does not end when summer is over. Thompsons Lake in winter is a fun place to skate, cross country ski, snowshoe or ice fish. But it requires preparation and diligence along with knowing basic guidelines about when ice is safe enough to venture out. Generally, new ice is usually stronger than old ice and ice seldom freezes uniformly – ice thickness can vary just a few feet away. With Spring approaching, remember ice at the end of the season is often unsafe.

As ice contracts and expands with temperature changes, loud booming noises can be heard but it is not always dangerous. Snow can insulate ice, but can also keep it from freezing. Slush is often a danger sign indicating weak or deteriorating ice.

How thick is safe ice? This depends on a number of factors and ice thickness tables normally refer to new hard clear ice. Most tables that I have found recommend staying off of ice that is less than 2 inches thick, and 3 to 4 inches of new ice is often considered safe for one person on foot.

There are several basic tips which will can enable you to enjoy a safe outing on the ice: First, never go out alone or at night which can hide hazards; if walking wear crampons; carry ice picks which can be found in many ice fishing stores but make sure they can float, or make one from a thick dowel about 6 inches with a nail and string attached; if you carry a

throw rope practice how to use it; watch for weak spots and abandoned fishing holes; avoid areas where there are streams or currents and especially where bubblers are used by docks; and refrain from driving on ice; besides safety, contaminants from under the vehicle are often left behind (Thompsons Lake is used for drinking). If you do fall through, Do Not Panic, icy cold water can cause a gag reflex which can be fatal, keep your mouth closed and climb out from the direction you went in using ice picks to pull yourself out while kicking your feet to help get back on the ice, then spread you weight by lying flat on the ice then crawl/roll away rather than standing right up to avoid going through again. Get to a warm location immediately.

For in depth information on lake ice, I found the following resources to be exceptional:

<http://lakeice.squarespace.com> - This site and it many links covers all you ever wanted to know about lake ice from safety to science and is geared toward recreational ice enthusiast.

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/ice/index.html> - Minnesota, the "Land of 10,000" lakes. Besides ice safety, this Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources website has a downloadable brochure on Hypothermia.

<http://www.thinkice.com> – Sweden (some browsers enable Swedish to English conversion)

Adirondack Ice, a Cultural and Natural History, by Caperton Tissot. Published by Snowy Owl Press 2010.

### **THANK YOU Friends !**

Thanks to the generous and big hearted Friends of Thacher our

“ Child on a Bus “ Drive has exceeded all that we could have hoped for.

**\$2,965.!!!**

**Thank You** from all the children yet to explore our unique treasure –  
Thacher State Park



### **Welcome to SPRING!!!**

Included in this month’s newsletter is our:  
**ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE PRE-ORDER FORM**

Please:

1. make your selections,
2. return by mail with contact information, order information and payment.

You will receive a confirmation of your order!

**Support Biodiversity!!**

## **Thacher’s Garden Gang reminds you that it’s not too early to think of SPRING and “I Love My Park Day” May 3, 2014**

The Park will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on September 13, 2014 and we are planning on making the Parks’ Flower Planters “pop”. If you would like to get your hands dirty instead of shoveling snow, we’d love to have you join us. Planters need to prepared, Annuals planted, areas raked and new planters set up. If you are interested, please give the Nature Center a call. 518.872.0800



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Wednesday, March 12, 2014

Next:

**Board Meeting**  
7:00 pm at the Thacher Nature Center

## Become a Bud Botanist

In early spring, when it's too muddy for skis or snowshoes, and too early for green, there is still good reason to go hiking at Thacher Park. Take a hand lens and go on a bud exploration. Now is the time to see how woody trees and shrubs have evolved to survive the winter, yet come quickly into activity once days become longer.

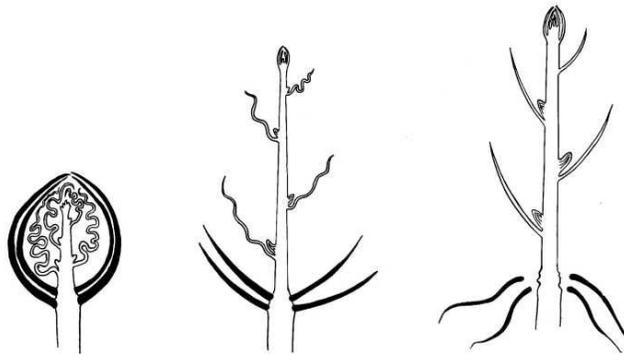
Buds can contain either stems and leaves or flowers, or both. If you section a large bud longitudinally, you will see a compressed, compact, undeveloped section of a stem, which was formed the previous fall. Tiny projections will develop into leaves when the bud unfolds. The lump at the top center is the *apical meristem*. This is the region where the cells are actively dividing so that new cells are continually being produced. (Yes, plants have stem cells too.) Around the outside are *bud scales* protecting the tender tissues inside from winter cold. These are basically modified leaves which have lost their food manufacturing ability. An-

nual plants don't have bud scales because they start anew every year, and need no winter protection.

Find a twig with large buds and visible structures to study with your hand lens. Beneath each bud you are likely to see a *leaf scar*. This is a shield shaped structure where last year's leaf was attached. Small dots in the scar are marks where water and sap passed in and out of the leaf. Along the twig are raised rough areas, *lenticels*, where gaseous exchange can take place. Another noticeable feature are the *bud scale scars*, wrinkled areas reminiscent of elephant skin. These scars are remnants of last year's bud scales.

With longer days and warm spring rains, the cells in the bud enlarge and elongate. This happens very quickly because a large amount of cell differentiation and formation has already taken place. Suddenly Thacher Park is filled with green leaves and woodland flowers. Your chance to study buds will have passed for another year.

— by *Sigrin Newell*



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