



Winter 2022 Newsletter

Volume XXXII #4

WCHS 82nd Annual Meeting Held



The view from Skene Manor overlooking the Village of Whitehall on a fine day. (Photo courtesy Kelly Mead)

WCHS members gathered at Skene Manor in Whitehall, NY on Saturday, October 29, 2022. It was a chilly, sunny day to visit the historic Manor. Attendees enjoyed light breakfast choices during the social coffee hour. The meeting was opened by President Nat Huntington. He thanked Skene Manor for providing our meeting venue and introduced Kris Miner, who welcomed our group, shared some history and facts about the building, and spoke briefly about the volunteer staff who help run the non-profit Whitehall Skene Manor Preservation Inc.

The business meeting included a year in review for WCHS programs and projects. Copies of committee reports were provided in a printed packet for attendees to review and ask questions. The 2023 nominations slate was presented for vote and members approved the slate as submitted. The proposed 2023 operating budget was also presented for vote and members approved the budget as submitted.

Nat Huntington announced the WCHS President's Award recipient for 2022 as Kay Tomasi for her work with the Finance Committee as chair and the many other things she has contributed to the Society. Nat also presented two special Service Awards to Steve Lapham and Dale Grinnell, who were special guests.

At the conclusion of the business meeting, Paul McCarty, chair of the James R. Cronkhite Award Committee, announced this year's recipient — Cliff Oliver Mealy. Paul gave a brief introduction about our recipient, followed by Claudia Blackler, who spoke about Cliff's many accomplishments. He has done extensive research about local history and the life and times of notable African Americans including Solomon Northup, John Thomas, Sgt. Henry Johnson and Lemuel Haynes. Cliff is also a well-known photographer.

More information on all of our award recipients can be found on page 3. We are grateful to their many contributions to WCHS.

Following the close of the business meeting and award announcements, our members and public moved upstairs to a standing room only presentation about Philip Skene. David Pitlyk, Historic Site Assistant at the Bennington Battlefield State Historic Site, spoke about the life and military career of Philip Skene, accompanied by a powerpoint presentation.

At the conclusion of the meeting, many of the attendees stayed for lunch in the Skene Manor dining room. Thank you to all who attended; we enjoyed welcoming our members to gather again in person for this annual event.



David Pitlyk speaks during his program about Philip Skene. (Photo courtesy Kathy Huntington)

Washington County Historical Society Mission Statement

The Washington County Historical Society is an educational organization dedicated to engaging diverse audiences in the study and application of the collective heritage of Washington County, New York, and its environs.

- Rev. October 2005

WCHS has a constantly growing collection of information, original documents, and other items of interest about Washington County and its inhabitants, past and present.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering to help with the Heritage Research Library, please contact the Historical Society and let us know.

Heritage Research Library



Jennifer LaRock

COVID Update:

The library is open for visitors!
Inquires can also be emailed to library@wchs-ny.org or by phone.

Normal hours:

Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Fridays, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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Greetings From Your President

To WCHS Members,

I hope this newsletter finds everyone enjoying the holiday season.

Hopefully you can take a few minutes from your busy schedule and read what has been happening with our Washington County Historical Society. I mentioned “our Society” as a reminder that this organization is made up of community members. Without you and other giving community members, there is no Washington County Historical Society. This is also why I invite you to feel free to contribute articles to the *WCHS Newsletter* or stories for the *WCHS Journal* anytime. Please inquire with the Society about how you can be involved by being on a committee or just volunteering time to help.

Our membership rolls have decreased over the past few years, so if you know of a friend, neighbor or anyone that might have an interest in the history of Washington County, please invite them to become a member too. If you have been thinking about giving an appeal donation this year and have not done so yet, it's never too late. If you have already donated, we sincerely thank you for your generosity.

We are considering a recipe section as a future feature of the *WCHS Newsletter*. We are looking for recipes that have a family tradition or a story behind them to print and feature in upcoming newsletters. If you have such a recipe to share, please email Connie Harris Farrington at connieandlee@roadrunner.com.

On October 29th we held our annual meeting at the Skene Manor in Whitehall. The meeting and the program on Philip Skene were well attended. We thank the volunteer staff of the Skene Manor who put on a nice lunch for us. If you have never been to Skene Manor, I would highly recommend you plan a visit.

Wishing everyone a Happy and Healthy Holiday and New Year!

Nat Huntington
WCHS President

Ways You Can Support WCHS

- ◆ **2022 Annual Appeal:** For the past 82 years, the Washington County Historical Society has relied on the generosity and community spirit of donors like you! Your support has helped us to protect and promote this rich history through varied programs and preservation efforts in our library and archives.
- ◆ **Renew your membership:** Visit our website or return the form on the back page of this *Newsletter*. Encourage others to join.
- ◆ **Consider a volunteer role:** Help us with what interests you most — contact the Society and let us know how you'd like to become involved.

We are proud of the work we do and grateful for our community's strong support of our work. We would like to count on you this year to aid in our efforts. Thank you!

WCHS Announces Award Recipients

The 2022 award recipients were celebrated for their accomplishments at the annual meeting, as noted below. The Society is grateful for their service and many contributions.

WCHS Special Service Awards



Dale Grinnell

Dale Grinnell was recognized for his service and dedication as the WCHS Treasurer. In addition to this role, Dale always helped behind-the-scenes, and could be counted on to step up when needed, including covering many shifts at the Washington County Fair on behalf of the Society. He worked on many historical projects while serving on the Board.



Steve Lapham

Steve Lapham was recognized for his 16 years working as the WCHS Administrator. Steve was a trusted employee, showing his dedication and commitment in his work. Steve could always be counted on to help with anything that was asked of him. He was the face of our Book Shop, and greeted visitors at the Wing-Northup House. He was a reliable and committed volunteer who was willing to help in any capacity on behalf of WCHS.

WCHS President's Award

The recipient of the WCHS President's Award was Kay Tomasi. (Kay was unable to attend the meeting in person and her certificate will be presented to her at a later date.) She serves on the WCHS Board of Trustees and was recognized for her excellent work as the Finance Committee Chair, always going above and beyond the duties of that role, and for being there to answer and help with any topic that arises.

The James R. Chronkhite Award



Claudia Blacker speaks about Cliff Oliver Mealy, while Paul McCarty looks on.



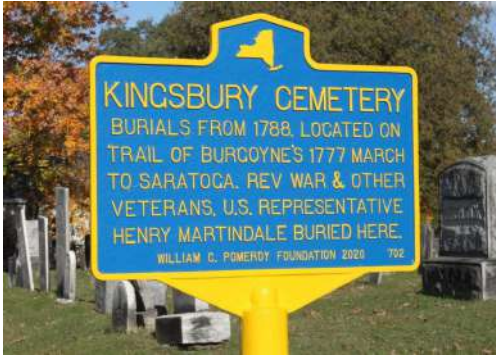
Cliff Oliver Mealy accepting his award; also in photo to right is Pat Niles.

Paul McCarty, Chairman of the 2022 James R. Cronkhite Award committee, announced this year's recipient as Cliff Oliver Mealy.

Paul McCarty and Claudia Blackler spoke of Cliff's many accomplishments including his extensive research of history in Greenwich, NY and Solomon Northup. Cliff is well-known for his roles bringing history alive to school groups, students and visitors, sharing stories about the Underground Railroad and notable figures in history.

(Photos on this page courtesy of Kathy Huntington).

Kingsbury Cemetery Commemoration



The Washington County Historical Society held a commemoration ceremony on Saturday, October 8, 2022, honoring the lives of the Revolutionary War veterans buried in Kingsbury Cemetery. The ceremony was part of the Society's ongoing program, begun in 2020, to identify the graves of soldiers buried in Washington County, preserve their tombstones, document their biographies, and honor their service. The program looks forward to the celebration of the 250th anniversaries of the signing of Declaration of Independence in 2026 and the Battles of Saratoga in 2027. There may be twenty or more Revolutionary War soldiers buried at Kingsbury Cemetery, but the Historical Society's Trustees and volunteers were only able to

assemble sufficient biographical information to tell ten of their stories. Surprisingly, none of the honored soldiers were born in Kingsbury; they came from a wide variety of social and economic backgrounds, from all over New York and New England, during and after the War. The most reliable information for the biographies came from U.S. Census, pension, and enlistment records, from local tax records, and from family genealogies. We are sharing summaries of the biographies here, which includes some historical background.

Asa Barney, 1756-1844

Asa Barney was born in Taunton, MA in 1756, enlisted in Col. Joseph Reed's Regiment in the Massachusetts Line in December 1775 and served in that Regiment until he was honorably discharged in Norwich, CT in December 1776. He worked as a laborer and apparently never married or owned any land. In 1819 he applied for a pension pursuant to the Act of Congress of March 18, 1818. President James Monroe, himself a veteran, pushed for the enactment of this legislation after his post-election tour of the United States in 1817. An observer reported that he was moved by the poverty and "broken-down condition" of many of the veterans he met. The 1818 Pension Act broke with tradition by offering former soldiers in financial need a lifetime pension as opposed to the longstanding policy of providing only invalid's and widow's pensions, and it was the first federal legislation that gave direct support to individuals based on need. A second Pension Act, passed on June 7, 1832, provided pensions to all veterans and their widows and children without regard to financial need or disability. On June 12, 1820, Asa Barney was awarded a pension of \$8.00 per month for life together with an arrearage, from the date of the Act to the date of the award, of \$126.47. In 1820, \$8.00 was worth around \$200.00 in today's money and \$126.47 was the equivalent of \$3,200.00. The 1840 Census shows Asa Barney living in the household of his nephew Throop Barney, in Kingsbury, where he died in 1844.

Joseph Caldwell, 1724-1811

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Caldwell was born in Ireland in 1724 and emigrated as a child with his family to Portsmouth, NH sometime between 1724 and 1726. In 1758 he and his wife Ann and their three children (there were eventually eleven) moved to Colrain, MA, and at some point during the War to Cambridge, NY, where he joined Van Woert's 16th Regiment of Albany Militia. In July 1777, the Regiment was called up at Hoosick, NY to join General Abraham Ten Broeck's Brigade, which fought at Saratoga. Joseph advanced from private to Lieutenant Colonel during six years of service. His large extended family was heavily involved in the Revolutionary War, serving as Minute Men in 1775, and at Bunker Hill, Fort Ticonderoga, and West Point, where his son William "served as part of General Benedict Arnold's guard and frequently saw General Washington." After the war, Colonel Caldwell served on several important commissions to settle affairs with the British and to negotiate the boundaries of the new State of Vermont. A family genealogy notes that he was "a man of great ability and in all records, he is called a 'gentleman'." With the coming of peace, he and his wife settled in Kingsbury, NY, where he was elected Town Supervisor and served as one of the first three Trustees of Kingsbury Cemetery (with Micajah Elliot) prior to his death in 1811.

The Elliot brothers: David (1744-93), Laban (Leaban) (1757-1830), Daniel (1760-1836) and Micajah (1753-1840).

Daniel and Micajah Elliot were residents of Kingsbury when they both applied for Revolutionary War pensions within months of the enactment of the second Pension Act on June 7, 1832 (see Asa Barney biography). The Elliot family, consisting of David Elliot and his sons David, Laban (also spelled Leaban), Daniel and Micajah, apparently resided in the Town of Dover in Dutchess County, NY, before the War broke out. In March 1775, Daniel volunteered for a two-month enlistment in the Dutchess County Militia and enlisted three more times, for a total of six additional months, from March 1778 through November 1780, when he was discharged while serving at Fort Edward under the command of Colonel Seth Warner. He states in his pension application that he was engaged in “routing through the woods and ferreting out the Indians and Tories as they were continually committing their depredations upon the inhabitants.” Micajah also joined the Dutchess County Militia in July, 1778 and like his brother was engaged in scouting and probably did not see combat. In his pension application, Micajah states that “in 1778 I went up to Kingsbury [NY] and worked on a farm my father and I had purchased until the fall of the year.” The first U.S. Census in 1790 shows that he, his father David and his brothers David, Daniel and Laban were living in Kingsbury at that time. According to a family genealogy prepared by their descendant Lauren Elliot, the father David and all of his sons were Revolutionary War veterans, but we were only able to find service records for Daniel and Micajah, whose pension applications were co-signed and attested to by their Congressman, Nathaniel Pitcher, who had served as Governor of New York following the death of DeWitt Clinton in 1828, and previously as a judge and Town Clerk in Kingsbury. David, Daniel, Micajah, their father David, and possibly also their brother Laban (we were unable to find a tombstone or burial record), are buried in Kingsbury Cemetery. Micajah served as a Trustee of the Cemetery with Colonel Joseph Caldwell (above).

Phineas Freeman, 1752-97

Phineas Freeman was born in April 1752 in New London, CT, and died in October 1797 in Kingsbury, NY. His name appears in the list of Connecticut men enlisted in the militia during the Revolutionary War, and in the 1782 list of Vermont militia. His record shows that he was an Ensign and Quartermaster in Sergeant’s Regiment of the Vermont Militia. In December 1782 the Regiment was called to suppress an “insurgency” in Windham County, VT, where supporters of Vermont’s secession from New York led by Ethan Allen were fighting the opponents of secession. In a letter, Phineas “prophesied doom for the [New] Yorkers aiming to take over Vermont.” His prophecy proved to be accurate.

Ichabod Kneeland, 1751-1819

Ichabod Kneeland was born in Marlborough, MA in 1751. When the Revolutionary War broke out in April 1775, he enlisted as a private in Woodbridge’s Regiment of Militia in the Massachusetts Line (also known as the 25th Regiment of Foot). The Regiment marched to Cambridge, MA, participated in the siege of Boston and fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. By 1800, he had moved to Granville, NY, where records show that he was a landowner with a house, farm and mills assessed at \$2,515 (\$54,331 in today’s money). The 1810 Census shows him living in Kingsbury, NY with his wife Cynthia and four slaves; slavery wasn’t abolished in New York State until July 4, 1827. In 1818, shortly after the Pension Act was passed by Congress and one year before his death, he states in his pension application that “by reason of my reduced circumstances in Life I am in need from my country for support.” The application was attested to by witnesses and a pension of \$8.00 per month with an arrearage payment of \$223.48 were approved. It is not known what may have caused his reduced circumstances, but his will indicates that he still owned slaves and land in 1819, the year of his death. Quite possibly he had fallen into debt and was cash poor, and he apparently refused to sell his slaves to raise money, as his will provides for their manumission, and the 1830 Census shows his wife Cynthia living with “4 free colored persons.” In her will she grants a life estate in her property to “my black woman Mahetabel” and gives the residual interest to “the black man George commonly called George Kneeland.” We note that in the 1850 census, a George Kneeland, “mulatto, [age] 39,” was living in Whitehall, NY and had a five-year-old daughter named Cynthia. Ichabod and his wife Cynthia are buried in Kingsbury Cemetery.

Peter Porter, 1737-99

Born in Weymouth, MA on February 12, 1737, Peter Porter was a Captain in Colonel Benjamin Simond's Berkshire Regiment of about 500 men in the Massachusetts Militia, known as the "Berkshire Boys." They responded to the Lexington Alarm in April 1775, fought at the Battle of White Plains in October 1776, and were stationed at Fort Ticonderoga from December 1776 until March 1777. In August 1777 the Regiment was called up during the Burgoyne Alarm and fought with General John Stark's Brigade of New Hampshire Militia at the Battle of Bennington, Vermont (David Elliot may have also fought at Bennington in Nichols' New Hampshire Regiment; see Elliot biography). Simond's Regiment then responded to the call of General Gates to march to Saratoga, fought at the Battle of Bemis Heights, and witnessed Burgoyne's surrender.

Matthew Scott, 1746-1813

Colonel Matthew Scott was born in Spencertown, Columbia County, NY on July 23, 1746. In the *History of Columbia County*, it is reported that just prior to the Revolution, there existed a "regiment of foot," of which Matthew Scott was the clerk. He later apparently enlisted as a private in Peter Van Ness' Ninth Regiment of Albany Militia in October 1776, in a detachment that was ordered to "hunt for and apprehend Tories in Kinderhook and Kings Districts in Albany County." The Regiment's pay records show that he served for only two days and was paid 3 Shillings 6 Pence for his service; however, Matthew very likely continued to serve in the Ninth Regiment, as his name appears in account records dated May 15, 1781 and January 10, 1783, which show that he received payments and bounties totaling 60 Pounds (worth around \$13,700 in today's dollars). According to family records, Matthew's daughter Margaret "Peggy" Scott, born in 1763 and was married to Governor Nathaniel Pitcher while he was serving as a judge and Town Clerk in Kingsbury from 1804-1814 (see Elliot biographies), so Matthew may have moved to Kingsbury to live near them. Margaret died on February 28, 1815, two years after her father, and is buried near him in Kingsbury Cemetery.

Nehemiah Seeley, 1743-1802

Born on September 18, 1743, in New Milford, CT, Nehemiah Lewis Seeley had deep New England roots. His ancestor Robert Seeley sailed from the Isle of Wight in England to Massachusetts in 1630 as Captain of one of John Winthrop's ships, and Nehemiah's father, Benjamin, served in both the French and Indian and Revolutionary Wars and died in the Battle of Ridgefield, CT in 1777. When the Revolutionary War broke out Nehemiah was living in Queensbury, NY in then-Charlotte County, in an area that later became part of Kingsbury. (Charlotte County was divided into Warren, Washington, Saratoga, and Clinton Counties after the war.) Seeley enlisted in the Charlotte County Militia as a Second Lieutenant on September 29, 1775 and was promoted to Captain on April 4, 1778. In July 1777 Seeley's house, which stood at the intersection of East Line and Sandy Hill Roads, lay directly in the path of the British Army as it marched south to Saratoga. The British burned the house to the ground, but fortunately his wife Mary and their children were able to escape with an oxcart to Fairfield, CT, presumably to stay with relatives for the duration of the War. The Militia fought in the Battles of Saratoga and according to tradition Nehemiah witnessed General Burgoyne's surrender in October 1777. After the war, Nehemiah and Mary returned to Kingsbury and eventually had 12 children. Nehemiah was a prominent citizen of Kingsbury after the war. He was a farmer and a bridgebuilder and built a grist mill near Kingsbury Street. According to legend he died in an accident on June 17, 1802, at age 59, while building a bridge.

Several sources indicate that the following persons buried in Kingsbury Cemetery were Revolutionary War veterans, but we could not find sufficient records to prepare complete biographies:

- Stephen Allen, 1751-1831
- Lieutenant Samuel Caldwell, 1772(?) - 1806
- Joseph Fellows, 1732-1819
- Captain John Hitchcock, 1716-1796
- Israel Mead (also spelled "Meed"), 1731-1806

- Captain John Morrison, 1728-1811 (father of Captain Hugh Morrison and Captain John Morrison)
- Captain Hugh Morrison, 1757-1813
- Henry Stewart, 1752-1835

The Washington County Historical Society would welcome any information from any source that might shed some light on the lives of these men.

The commemoration ceremony was called to order at 10:00 a.m. with the firing of a cannon by the Second Continental Artillery Crew. Trustee Susan Arena then welcomed the guests and introduced Joan Prouty, Trustee of the cemetery. Joan discussed its history, noting that the first burials, in unmarked graves, were those of several British soldiers in Burgoyne's Army who died on the march to Saratoga, and that twenty-eight of the original signers who formed the cemetery were known to have been Revolutionary War soldiers. A second firing of the cannon introduced the ceremony to honor the buried soldiers. The assembly then walked to each grave site, where Trustees Susan Arena and Pat Niles read the biographies; a map of the cemetery with the location of each grave was provided. A third firing of the cannon, followed by a moment of silence, ended the program.

The Board wishes to thank Trustee Jim Arndt, and volunteers Connie Farrington and Pat Wells, for their efforts in researching and cross-checking the soldiers' biographies. The Society hopes that their work can be replicated by volunteers in each Washington County community in order to honor the memory of Revolutionary War veterans buried among us, who dedicated their lives to the cause of Liberty and Justice to which we and much of the world still aspire.

We hope to host similar events in other Washington County cemeteries as we look forward to the anniversary celebrations in 2026 and 2027.

WCHS 2022 Board of Directors

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President	Nathaniel Huntington
Vice President	Patrick Niles
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Finance — Kay Tomasi
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Joan Handy

WCHS HISTORIAN

John A. Mead



Attendees tour through the Kingsbury Cemetery during our commemoration event. The cemetery is located at the corner of Route 4 and Kingsbury Road, Kingsbury, NY (Photo courtesy Pat Niles)



167 Broadway Fort Edward NY 12828-1709

Telephone (518) 747-9108

WCHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Renewal

Winter 2022 Newsletter

Name _____ Date _____
Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____
Telephone () _____ E-mail _____

Do you have an off-season address? (e.g. start: January; end: March)

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____
Away Date: _____ Return Date: _____



Membership Category	Price
Senior Couple/Senior Individual/ Student	\$25
Family/Individual	\$35
Patron	\$50
Contributing	\$75
Sustaining	\$150
Benefactor	\$500

I would like to include an additional gift of \$ _____ for: _____ Library Operations _____ General Fund
 Please contact me about becoming a WCHS volunteer. I would like my Newsletter: E-mailed OR Mailed?

Please note that the WCHS membership year is January 1 thru December 31. New memberships received after October 1 will be honored for the following year. Annual memberships and donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.