

Major Events – The Second Hundred Years

The Hague Flood of 1947

The date of Tuesday, June 3, 1947, will go down in history as the day of the Hague Flood. Those of us who have read of the disastrous floods which have inundated cities and communities along the large rivers considered ourselves safe from this form of danger.

Following a night of torrential downpour, we awoke to find the Hague Brook, already swollen from a previous rain, now rushing through the valley with a volume of water never before seen by the oldest residents of the town. It was washing over a two-foot stone wall on my property. The brook was at least three feet above its usual flood stage. Two chicken houses were about to be surrounded by water. About eight o'clock the water began to go down. I walked up to the Big Falls, or tried to, but came upon a landslide above the Rock and Rye corner. A forty-foot section of the high bank had slid down and mud now covered the road to a depth of two feet.

About eight-thirty there was a gradual rise in the brook level, and soon was higher than ever. Inasmuch as the hen houses were now on an island, and the 45 birds living within were non-swimmers, quick action was necessary. Five trips through a knee-deep flood and most of the protesting boarders were in a safer home, the garage. Twenty-four five-week-old chicks were carried in a burlap bag through the flood. It was necessary to leave five hens in the house. They all laid that day too, probably in appreciation for a floor washed clean. Incidentally, to save the garage I unrolled a roll of chicken wire to catch debris and divert the flow of water around the piers.

By that time the brook was flowing over the bridge and running down the road. In no time the street was a raging torrent. I rushed up to the house and told the family to cross the road before the water became higher. About that time Clifford Frasier came along and we climbed upon his log truck. Rev. Murray's family and Marian Robbins were also among those rescued. Barrels, fireplace wood from Art McKee's and assorted debris accompanied us on our aquatic ride. The nearest terra firma was 'way over beyond the Beachside. As soon as possible I hiked back along the high-water mark to the village. The entire Beachside flat was under water. A current of water was pouring through Bob Hoyt's garage. What I remember most vividly was the pile of 20 or more big casks, vinegar barrels or John Keenan's cider barrels, tumbling end over end out the open side of the building. They crossed two wire fences and floated right along to the lake. Such a force of water crossed the highway

bridge that Bill Cobb's gas tanks were washed out of the ground. The main road was gullied out as much as six feet deep.

Besides the damage caused in the village, the flood washed out much valuable land on the flats and in West Hague. One favorable result of the flood was that a great quantity of fish came down from the Beaver Marsh. Bushels of bullheads were washed into the lake. People were picking them up on their lawns. The brook was so full of trout that it was an angler's dream. The following year I caught 186 trout, keeping only of those above eight inches in length. The Lake George bullhead fishing has been excellent ever since the flood.

Few people realize the amount of water that came down the brook that day and with what force. Trees standing near the stream show bruises eight feet above the normal water level. An eight- or ten-inch I-beam was bent double around a tree a hundred feet below the

Rock and Rye Bridge. It had once been a stringer supporting the planks. Trees were stripped of bark and even uprooted. Stone retaining walls near the stream crumbled under the force of the water. The old log dam which once impounded water to operate the Yaw sawmill was washed out.

Due to impassable roads and weakened bridges, school buses were not used for a week and the children enjoyed an unexpected vacation. State, County and Town road crews were quickly mobilized to repair the highway damage. A great amount of filling and resurfacing had to be done quickly as the summer resort season was about to begin.

Water undermined the garage by the Wesleyan parsonage. The car owned by Rev. Clarence Murray slipped into the stream. It plunged end over end, finally coming to rest against the wreckage of Roy Scott's garage. The car was a total wreck. Earlier efforts had been made to rescue it from the doomed garage but the rear wheels had slipped down over a bank. The tow truck could not raise it.

I was surprised to find my own poultry houses in place, though flooded. A small cabin, the temporary summer home of the Arthur McKee's, was left stranded on the road above my house. As the water slowly returned to normal, the real extent of the damage became apparent. Cellars were flooded, lawns and gardens were gullied or left under a layer of stones and mud. One-half of the village park was washed away. The entire length of the Sawmill Hill was impassable to all but foot traffic. In some places less than three feet of macadam separated the washouts. These were as

much as six feet deep. All wooden bridges were gone. The cement bridge by the Town Shed was impassable as the five feet of fill over it was completely washed away.

The cause of the flood was a combination of circumstances, all working together. In 1941 the Hague Fish and Game Club improved the beaver dam at the Marsh by building a high dirt dam all across the lower end of the pond and installing a concrete spillway. This job was started on Dec. 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor Day. When the level of the pond raised with the rain, the rowboats drawn up on the shore floated down against the spillway, clogging it. Water then eroded the dam so it soon gave way. Where the stream entered a culvert at the foot of Big Brook Hill there was a long, deep fill. When the pressure of water became strong enough this gave way and the whole pond was soon on its way down the valley, taking all in its path. John McCoy may have been the only person to have seen the wall of water start its journey to the lake. The stream bed was too narrow to carry this great body of water. The Beaver Marsh was a mile long and, in place, fifteen feet deep. When this amount of water followed the course of the stream to Lake George, things had to happen. The Great Flood of 1947 was the result. It will long remain in the memory of those who experienced it.

Hague Central School Basketball Champions of 1978

Though the student body was small, basketball was BIG. In 1937, within one decade of being built, the boys' and girls' teams could have it their own way. In 1978-1979, over all their rivals in the surrounding Adirondack towns, Hague's Raiders won the Marcy League Championship in Albany and became Semi-Finalists in the NY State tournament at Rochester.

Alas, the championship basketball games of 1978 and 1979 marked the end of an era—and marked the end of Hague Central School. The majority of Hague's voters opted for annexation. In hopes that consolidating the school district with Ticonderoga would save dollars on property taxes; Hague's children would go to school in Ticonderoga. A few years later the Hague Central School building was razed.

Without the school, the townspeople lost their gathering place and some would say, the people lost much more. There were no more Memorial Day Parades, spring concerts, athletic competitions or practices held in Hague. People missed the social life that revolved around school events. Sports activities, musical concerts,

Christmas parties, and school plays were special events that still evoke great memories.

Competing for the Marcy League Basketball Championship, Hague played against New York's Tuxedo Park. Jim DeLarm remembers the turn-outs to the basketball games. "You ought to have seen it. The whole town went. We rented a bus with 50 people on it. My son Mike was on the team—he on the team bus—they had a bus of their own"

"What happened was, with just a couple of seconds left in the game, Mike fired the ball from far away and scored the last points. The ball was up in the air just about when the final whistle blew. We didn't think we won the game. But the ball was in the air, you see, so it counted." Mike made the basket and that broke the tie." Hague beat Tuxedo Park 59-58.

The members of the Hague team are as follows: Back row left to right: Larry Bolton, Mike Fish, Barry Jordon, Mike DeLarm, Alvin Frasier. Middle row: Ron Fuller, O.J. Simpson, Danny Olcott, Barry Sharpe and Coach Mike Riley. Front row left to right: Randy Frasier, Mike Streeter, and Randy Perkins.

In the 1978 tournament the Hague Raiders became the Marcy League Basketball Champions of the Capital Conference in Albany. That meant the Raiders would compete for the New York State Class D Championship in Rochester the next year.

Jim DeLarm continued his story saying the boys were up-beat. "Busloads from Hague and our area were packed solid. Fans from the other Adirondack towns that the Raiders had played against came to Rochester, too. It took three days out of the week to travel back and forth. "Everybody from Hague took off from work at IP (International Paper Co.) We went in a caravan of cars and stayed over two nights. It took one day to get there, the day to see the game, then to drive back home."

But this time, the Raiders came out second-best. Still, they came home with the title of Semi-Finalist Champions. As Jim DeLarm told it, "I watched both teams come out on the floor. About three-quarters of the team from New York City were 7 feet tall! They had a lot of reach on us! We were beat before we began."

The photo of the Raiders was featured on page 10 on March 29, 1978 with a photo of the Hague Raiders with their coach. At left, the late George May (d. 2011) shows the page to his wife Ida. She has saved the clipping from *the Press Republican* newspaper for over 30 years. The headline read:

CONGRATULATIONS
To the 1978
BASKETBALL CHAMPION
Hague Raiders
Champions – Marcy Conference
Champions Class D – Section Seven
Champions Class D – Capital Conference Albany
Semi-Finalists Class D – N.Y.S.
Championship at Rochester

"Randy Perkins scores 20 points, Mike Fish adds 14 and Barry Jordan and Randy Frazier each add 10 as Hague beats Tuxedo 59-58 to become the first Section VII School to reach the Final Four in the state basketball tournament. Hague loses to Lyme 72-57 in the Class D semifinals."

Back in 1937, when Hague's Central School was ten years old, Hague's basketball teams "had their own way," when the *Ticonderoga Sentinel* columnist reported the action of both the girls' and boys' games played the week before Christmas. Hague competed against its traditional rival, Horicon. On the court, members of the girls' team who were surely "going places" included Doris and Edna Forte, Jenny Peleraim and Pricilla Yaw. The teams "played a fairly even contest until the final quarter when our lassies, led by the irrepressible Jean Bennett, scored a 27-14 victory. Miss Bennett, along with her aggressive teammate, Jeanette Shattuck, accounted for 26 points."

The 1937 boys' team also had claim to victory on the scoreboard with 52-10 but the game was less exciting. The reporter wrote, For the boys who like to see a high scoring game, it was a pippin, but for the ones interested in tense moments, close scores, intercepted passes and rapid interchange of offense, it was a flop. (*Ticonderoga Sentinel*, Thurs Dec 23, 1937)

Today, the evidence of the 1978 and 1979 championship status of the Hague Raiders is housed in the hall of the Hague Museum in Hague's Community Building. Jim DeLarm had built a trophy case for the Raider's donating the materials and his craftsmanship. At the time of the consolidation of Hague Central School with Ticonderoga Schools, Jim recalls, "Ticonderoga sent a moving truck to take possession of all of Hague's school equipment--the books, the tools from the woodshop—everything. It was all legal. They had a right." Except when it came to taking the trophy case. Since it had been a donated gift and the school hadn't

purchased it, Hague Town Supervisor Dick Bolton (1978-1991) intervened. Ti was not to take the trophy case, also saying, according to Jim Delarm, "And you're not taking the office," meaning his own office, where the furnishings had been donated in memory of his grandfather, Richard J. Bolton. The trophy case and its contents belonged to Hague, too.

2007 Bicentennial

The Town of Hague celebrated its 200th anniversary with a Town-wide Bicentennial Celebration in August 2007. While many events leading up to the weekend of August 17 - 19, 2007 were tied in with a Bicentennial theme (Memorial Day Parade, Historical Society program, Lake George Open Swim and the initial North Country Triathlon), it was this three-day event filled with activities that formed the core of the Celebration. There were rides and games for children in the Lake George Land Conservancy Park [now called "Peggy's Point"], displays of old cars, a flotilla parade of antique boats, a chicken barbecue and live music in the Town Park, a cruise on the Lake on the Mohican, rousing fireworks, a remembrance service and brunch in the Park and the filling of the Bicentennial Time Capsule. Adding to the success were perfect "Lake George days" - glorious blue skies and plenty of sun.

In conjunction with the Bicentennial weekend, the alumni of Hague Central School held an all-class reunion bringing together graduates from the earliest days of the Hague School in the late 1920's with those of the last class in 1979. They renewed old acquaintances at Reunion Headquarters in the Hague Community Center – site of the former Hague School and enjoyed a Reunion Luncheon and program at the Town Park.

One of the lasting outcomes of this Bicentennial was the creation of the Hague Historical Museum. In August 2006 the History Committee of the Town Bicentennial Committee decided on a plan to revamp the Hague Museum, which had a Board of Directors separate from the Hague Historical Society.

They planned it to open in time for the Town's Bicentennial Celebration in 2007 using the space that was already in use in the Community Center. Virginia Westbrook was hired as a consultant as she had originally been the consultant for the Town Museum committee in 2004. It was felt that most of the work could be done by the volunteers with help from Virginia's expertise and contacts with design firms. The volunteers did much of the research and planned the exhibits which were then professionally fabricated and installed. The room with the exhibits is known as

the Clifton F. West Memorial Room of the Hague Historical Museum. The Historical Society, which had reorganized in 2006 then took over the management of all future activities of the Museum.