Christmas in Sweden
by Philip Parr

Editor’s Note: This description of the Christmas holiday in Sweden was sent to us by member Philip Parr for the December Chronicles. It is an account of the Christmas season in Sweden written in 1974 by his father’s relatives who live in Sweden.

The longest holiday in Sweden is Christmas which begins on St. Lucia’s Day (December 13th) and ends on St. Knutt’s Day (January 13th).

Many decorations and candles are placed around the house. The use of straw animals is a tradition; for straw symbolizes grain, and therefore the family’s food and prosperity. Even angels, stars, and tiny baskets are made of straw.

A few days before Christmas the gifts to be distributed are carefully wrapped or covered. Smaller parcels are placed in a wicker basket. The entire family helps to select the tree. It is erected and decorated by noon on December 24th, and late in the afternoon, presents are placed under the tree.

About 6 p.m., the family gathers in the kitchen. Candles are lit. It is time to eat. On the stove is a kettle of steaming broth, deliciously flavored, perhaps with ham or Swedish sausage (korv). Each person spears a piece of dark-brown bread with a fork and dips it in the broth. Father says, “GOD YULE!” Then a prayer is said, and the bread is eaten. Next, Swedish punch (glog) is drunk. “Skol!” is said as members touch glasses.

The meal begins with a splendid smorgasbord (spreads of bread). There is creamed cod fish (lutfisk), Swedish head cheese, pickled herring (sil), boiled potatoes, green peas, and ham. Often rice porridge, boiled pudding, and pies are included. When the family is finished eating, the table is cleared, and the dishes washed.

Then all adjourn to the living room where the tree and presents are located. The children light the candles, and while they are busy, one of the adults slips away, and soon tapping is heard on the front door. The door is opened
The Armistice Car

Trains are always a popular topic at the Museum. During the 2014-2016 exhibit seasons, our theme was transportation. A big part of that was our railroad heritage. This holiday season, I will once more be operating our unique S-gauge holiday railroad display as we celebrate “Trains, Trees and Treats” on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

This year, the holiday season really begins with the centennial remembrance of the end of our participation in World War I. Just as it did in 1918, the joy of the Armistice on November 11th ushers in the joyous December holidays. What the last few generations have forgotten, however, is the role that railroads played in the war effort. In particular, most people have forgotten the role of one particular railroad car.

After weeks of tentative talks about ending the fighting; and with the stress on the German army and government beginning to show; Allied and German civil and military leaders agreed to sign an armistice in the forest of Compiègne, not far from Allied headquarters at Montfacon, near the Argonne forest. The signing ceremony took place in a former dining car (or wagon, as the French called it) that was then used as part of French Marshal Ferdinand Foch’s mobile headquarters train.

November 11, 1918

The War is Over!

At the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, the Great War ended. At 5 a.m. that morning, Germany, bereft of manpower and supplies and faced with imminent invasion, signed an armistice agreement with the Allies in a railroad car outside Compiègne, France. The First World War left nine million soldiers dead and 21 million wounded, with Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, and Great Britain each losing nearly a million or more lives. In addition, at least five million civilians died from disease, starvation or exposure.

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What Day Should You Visit the Historical Society
If you have noticed, over the last few years the Historical Society has become a beehive of community activity. Visitors are coming and going all the time. Because, we generally do not have the resources to offer all our services all the time, I thought I would offer a short look at when it is best to come to the Museum for your particular purpose.

Let’s start with our hours of operation. The Museum is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays. On Saturdays we welcome visitors from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. During the summer, we stay open until 9 p.m. on Wednesdays but between January and May, regular hours apply. Evening hours can vary when we host educational programs or social events. Call the Museum to be sure.

If you are interested in using the Research Library or need some assistance looking things up, the best days are Tuesday mornings and all day Wednesday. Our genealogy research team led by Betty McMahon meets here on Tuesdays; and on Wednesdays, Linda Alexander, our Volunteer Librarian is usually here. If you cannot make it to the Historical Society, then we suggest sending in a research request (see www.ochs.org). Our local history research team led by Barbara Stahl, also meets here — except during the summer — in the lower level on Tuesday mornings. They are currently looking into matters pertaining to the Granger Homestead and would be happy to visit with you and talk about their work.

If you have business to do with us, please feel welcome to come in any day we are open; Maureen can likely help you or steer you to the right person. However, if you have an artifact to show us, want to meet with Wilma, our Curator; Preston Pierce, our Museum Educator, or me, we are normally here every day during Museum hours; but it is best to call ahead for an appointment. Community and school groups meet here frequently and can do so any day of the week. We have several places to gather and can meet your needs. The Museum can offer programs on local history, provide a quiet room for a private meeting and we can give a backside tour of the Museum archives to your community group; reservations are needed. Many groups schedule several months in advance, but we can usually help out on short notice. Again, call or drop us an email to start the conversation.

Any time we are open is a good time to visit the Museum to take in our exhibits. This holiday season the Museum is commemorating the centennial of the World War I Armistice with an exhibit on Ontario County in the Great War. It is children friendly and has many artifacts and the names of county residents that fought in the European theater and served here on the home front. It is a great way to spend a half-hour with family and friends. The Ontario County Arts Council has their latest unique exhibit, “Rock Paper Scissors”, a must see eclectic collection of interesting art. But, the real attraction is the American Flier model railroad display that we will be running daily or at your personal request. Kids love this and can learn about local history to boot.

The answer to the initial question is — take your pick, Tuesdays are a bit hectic but overall any day is a good day to visit the Historical Society to see the exhibits. Admission is always free. Make an appointment to meet with staff or to schedule a room. But no matter what your needs we guarantee that you will be greeted with a smile and we will do our best to help you out. That’s why we are here.

Have a wonderful holiday season and a pleasant and productive New Year.
Curator’s Loft
by Wilma Townsend

We are now looking towards our next exhibit on the origins of Prohibition and its impact on the Roaring Twenties. Prohibition had its roots in the 19th century temperance movement which was one of the many reform movements that swept across the country at that time. Many of these temperance reform leaders and supporters lived in Western New York; they would continue their fight until the Prohibition Amendment was passed in 1919.

So how did temperance and later prohibition affect the citizens of Ontario County, especially during the 1920s? What groups were in favor of or against the consumption of alcohol and why? When alcohol sales became illegal, what were the ways that consumers got around the law?

While we can locate local and regional historical information about the Prohibition Era, we are seeking stories about local people and places that were linked to making, buying and/or selling alcohol. We also are looking for artifacts that reflect the time period – a still, winemaking equipment, a turn of the 20th century bar, kegs, clothing of the era.

If you have something that you feel would be of interest to this exhibit, please let me know at curator@ochs.org or 585-394-4975. Cheers! Salut! Skol!

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and in comes Jultomten (gnome-like, the Swedish Santa). He has a sack of presents on his back for children. In a disguised voice he asks, “Are there any good girls and boys in this house?” “Of course,” is the answer.

The presents are then distributed, and as Jultomtem leaves he says, “God Jule.”

Now the gifts in the basket are distributed, one at a time. Each is opened before another is presented. It is then bedtime for everyone, for church service is 6 a.m. the next morning, Christmas.

Christmas day is a time of rest for the adults, while the children play with their gifts.

On December 26th, the social life of the holidays begins and friends and relatives exchange visits.
Our Historical Society’s Archives Team

by Barbara Stahl

Every Tuesday since June 2010, a group of researchers have met to be part of an Archives Team with the specific focus to build, organize, and report on historical resources regarding Canandaigua’s Thompson and Clark families. Frederick and Mary Clark Thompson certainly left a strong mark on the Canandaigua area with Sonnenberg and their many legacies still visible in the community.

This team consisting of history lovers, librarians, and archivists saw the need to organize, record in a database, transcribe letters, write books, give presentations, and generally leave important archival materials available for scholars to come. For the Ontario County Historical Society, this team has transcribed and digitized approximately 1,500 letters and diaries. Hard copies of the transcriptions have been made available.

Some of the highlights of these transcriptions are Frederick Ferris Thompson’s diaries from 1864 to 1881 (with a few years missing); and letters from Mary Clark Thompson, who joined her widowed sister Zilpha Clark Backus in Europe after Frederick’s death in April 1899. She and Zilpha wrote to relatives during their European stay from August 1899 to October 1901. They visited many villas and gardens and the letters consistently detailed flowers and/or gardens they had seen while traveling.

Mary wrote about collecting photographs of gardens as well as live plants or bulbs which she sent home to her sister, Abigail Clark Williams. Previously very few things written in Mary Clark Thompson’s hand had been found, so these were very important in putting together a piece of the Thompson story. Surely, these European sights influenced the Sonnenberg garden designs we now see there.

Frederick’s diaries gave glimpses into his life, interests, and thoughts beyond what we knew about his banking and photography. We discovered that he enjoyed learning about scientific advancements and technology, was a lover of books, art, music, plays, and had a sense of humor. He was an abolitionist and very upset when Lincoln was assassinated as recorded in his April 15, 1865 diary entry.

Another interesting series of letters transcribed by the team were those of George Williams (Mary’s sister Abigail’s husband) who fought in the Civil War. He reports where he is and describes what he sees.

Still more diaries were transcribed; two by Mary Clark Thompson in 1906 and 1912 as she travels in Europe, and some belonging to Myron Holley Clark (Mary Clark Thompson’s father) who was the Governor of New York State from 1855 to 1857.

For these archivists, it is a labor of love, and next up will be transcribing letters in the Gideon Granger Collection. Their hope is that local history can be readily accessible for future interested people.

The Archives Team meets with researchers or interested people by appointment. Please call the Ontario County Historical Society at 585-394-4975 to make an appointment.

Archives Team: Carm Battaglia, Mary Jo Gigliotti, Kathy Kardesh, Mary Jo Lanphear, Kathie Linse, Jacqueline Lowe, Barbara Stahl, and Polly Taussig
Your Historical Society

Linda Hawks and Family at the “Speak Easy” Party

Groove Juice Swing at “Speak Easy” Party

“Speak Easy” Party Table

“Art Out of the Attic” Appreciation Luncheon at Dave and Gail Hewson’s November 12th

Historians Meet on New Regional Suffrage Project

“Art Out of the Attic” Committee
Holiday Anticipation
by Maureen O’Connell Baker

It’s a month before Christmas and ready are we
With exhibits, books and art work for everyone to see.
The South Gallery reflects WWI and the County
A quiet reminder to families not so lucky.
Enter through the trenches for artifacts and more
Take notice to the timeline that details this war.

In the North Gallery is “Rock Paper Scissors”
With Trees, Dancing Elves, and rusty old Clippers.
The Arts Council’s been busy creating with a flare
Including a sculpture called “Rock-n-Chair”.

If trains are your thing, then you must come and see
Our Holiday Village with not one track, but three!
The Polar Express makes its rounds twice a day
A nostalgic reminder Santa’s on his way.

We invite you to visit for gifts, books and more
And follow us on Facebook to see what’s in store.
From our family to yours we wish you good cheer
Happy Holidays to all and a Happy New Year!

Bookshop News

Two new publications are now available at OCHS.

VOTES FOR WOMEN! The Woman Suffrage Movement in Ontario County, New York

$25 + 1.88 tax. Shipping available @ $7.50 + tax

Tales From the Graveyard: A Centennial Salute to Ontario County Veterans of World War I
By Museum Educator, Preston E. Pierce. A collection of veterans’ stories to encourage readers to seek and visit the final resting places of these men and women. Their stories appear in no particular order, done deliberately to emphasize that all the stories contribute to our understanding of the experience of World War I and how it impacted these veterans and the generations that followed.

$10 + .75 tax. Shipping $3.50 + tax
News and Announcements

We want to thank everybody who attended our Annual Meeting on November 4th, at Warfield’s Restaurant. Special thanks to Jim Connors, Clifton Springs Historian, who hosted a pre-event wine reception and tour of the Clifton Springs History Museum. It is quite a place and worthy of a trip to Clifton Springs to see its great exhibits.

We have recently received a grant from the Preservation League of New York to coordinate with county historians from a 10-county region to identify and map significant venues and people who contributed to the advancement of woman’s suffrage. Dr. Judy Wellman and Dana Teets are the primary people on this project. The project is expected to generate information that will be available on the internet and possibly have historic markers set and funded by the Pomeroy Foundation.

October saw two fundraising events that helped bring the Historical Society’s fiscal year to a successful conclusion. We closed the books for the year on October 31st.

“Art Out of the Attic” on October 19th and 20th, brought dozens of people into the Museum over the weekend to bid on nearly 300 pieces of donated art. The event could not have happened but for a great group of community volunteers who came forward to help the Historical Society. Special thanks to Vice President, Dave Hewson, who organized the event.

Our second annual “Speak Easy” 1920s theme party was held at the Canandaigua Yacht Club on Saturday October 6th. Entertainment was provided by the Groove Juice Swing who demonstrated dances from the 1920s era. Our guests joined in and really made the place hop. Special thanks for Elizabeth Gerhart who managed the silent auction and to the Board members who donated a great set of baskets. Dave Hewson, the Event Chairman, did a great job finding the entertainment and organizing the event.

Museum Educator, Preston Pierce’s history book club continues to meet. This fall, their topic is the First World War. Three books are being read and discussed. They will have a new topic in January. If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Preston through the Museum.

The latest exhibit brought to the Museum by the Ontario County Arts Council is called, “Rock Paper Scissors”. It is an eclectic collection of art in the medium of… Rocks, Paper and Scissors, what else. It runs through December 22th.

We are happy to report that our popular model railroad winter wonderland exhibit will be on display starting on Thanksgiving weekend and will stay up until late winter. It is a great reason to bring your holiday guests, young and old alike, into the Museum over the holidays. Preston Pierce tells us that it has three American Flier trains running and one is the famous Polar Express.

Finally, we are mourning the passage of former Board member and benefactor, Marjorie Morris, of Clifton Springs. Marjorie passed on October 13th at the age of 95. She was predeceased by her husband, Isaac “Drew” Morris.
Mail Box

Dear Ed,

Many thanks for being a volunteer judge for our D.A.R. Good Citizen Award program.

We do appreciate your efforts and insights.

Kathy Purdie
Canandaigua Chapter
NSDAR

Dear Ed,

On behalf of the Ontario County Arts Council Board of Directors, we would like to thank you and the Ontario County Historical Society and Museum for the shared partnership in History and the Arts, this past year, and your support of the Arts Council’s mission to promote arts and culture in the community.

As a token of our appreciation, we are making the Historical Society a complimentary business member of the Arts Council. We look forward to working together and continuing our relationship of fellowship in 2019.

Sincerely,

Judi Cermak
Sherry Rodin Sulkes

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The Allies treated the armistice as more of a surrender than a mere agreement to end the fighting. The Germans found the terms, including an Allied occupation of part of the Rhine Valley, humiliating. However, they were not in a position to do much about it in the late fall of 1918. In fact, the armistice was the event that precipitated the abdication of the German Kaiser and plunged German government and society into chaos.

When a resurgent Germany defeated France in 1940, Adolph Hitler insisted that the original armistice car be brought back to the exact site in the forest of Compiègne. He forced the French to surrender to his forces in that same car; an act of humiliation for France.

Later the German SS troops moved the car to two locations in Germany as a prize of war. Near the end of the war, the SS leadership ordered the car destroyed and it was burned. Only a few metal fittings were saved and they are on display at the Armistice Museum. The French railway company found another car of the same series, a remarkable twin, and it was brought to the museum in Compiègne where visitors can see it today.

On both sides, railroads played a critical role in supporting the war effort. In America, the government actually took over the major railroads during the war, creating the US Railroad Administration. In France, the last act of the war, the signing of the armistice on Nov. 11, 1918, took place in the most important railroad car of that time.
The OCHS Organization

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We wish to extend a special thanks to all of the volunteers who donate so many countless hours in support of the Historical Society.

Address correspondence to:
Ontario County Historical Society
55 North Main Street
Canandaigua, New York  14424

We are open Tuesday through Friday 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Saturday 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Closed on major holidays.

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Please “Like” us on Facebook! Just go to www.facebook.com and search for the Ontario County Historical Museum.

Business Members

We wish to thank the business members listed below for their continued support. Please consider them when purchasing goods and services. In addition to these business members, we also appreciate the small donations we receive from dozens of local businesses in Ontario County each year.

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Membership Benefits in the Ontario County Historical Society
Receive Regular Museum Mailings — Keep Up-to Date on all Society Activities
Reduced Admission to Society Events and Fund Raisers, including Tour of Homes
(admission to the museum is always free)
Free assistance in the Museum's Rare Documents/Genealogy Library
Membership in Time Travelers, a National Museum Benefit Program
10% savings on Museum Books Shop purchases
Subscription to our quarterly newsletter, CHRONICLES

Ontario County Historical Society

Membership Application Form

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General Membership Support:
___ Sr. Citizen $30; ___ Individual $35; ___ Family $50; ___ Friend $75

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___ Centennial $100; ___ Benefactor $150; ___ Heritage Circle $250; ___ Director $500+

___ Please accept my additional gift of $____
___ I am interested in making an endowment gift; please contact me.

Total Membership: $_________ + Additional gift: $______ = Total $_________

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Return to:
OCHS; 55 No. Main St.
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November 28: 6:30 p.m. — “Pebble Art”; Arts Council Workshop

December 1: 12:00 — 3:00 p.m. — Volunteer Reception

December 5: 7:00 p.m. — Genealogy Society Christmas Social

December 8: 3:00 p.m. — OCHS Holiday Open House

December 12: 6:30 p.m. — “Paper Dolls”; Arts Council Workshop

December 23: Closed for the Holidays — December 23 — January 1; re-opens January 2, 2019

February 6: 7:00 p.m. — Genealogy Society Meeting

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