

Hudson Fulton Champlain Quadricentennial

Throughout New York State, 2009 marks some very important anniversaries. New Yorkers will be celebrating 400 years of Henry Hudson's discovery of the river that now bears his name, as well as, Samuel de Champlain's exploration of what has become Lake Champlain. It also marks the 200th anniversary of Robert Fulton's maiden journey up the Hudson River in the first successful steamboat.

Although Pittstown's history of settlement by our European ancestors does not date back 400 years, the mission of the Quadricentennial is to "engage the public as well as civic, education, cultural and heritage organizations to develop and support related plans and activities ... benefiting future generations, and will focus local, state, national and international attention on the history, culture and natural resources of New York State."

The Pittstown Historical Society (PHS) is developing several projects, involving the Cooksboro hamlet, one of the earliest communities in Pittstown, to help fulfill the mission of the Quadricentennial. Cooksboro, which is located in the southwest corner of Pittstown, was first settled in the late 1700s by the Vandercooks, a family of Dutch ancestry. As one of the first settled areas in Pittstown, the hamlet reflects broad patterns of change.

Several projects have already been completed. These include research and articles on the Simeon Button farm by Walter Auclair and research and article on Michael S. Vandercook, son of Michael the Elder, by Ronald Bachman.

Other projects are underway or in the planning stage. Research continues on historic structures, including the Pine Tavern, School #4, and churches and comprehensive mapping of the area. Progress reports will be published in the Pittstown Historical Society newsletter and featured at one or more of the Society's lectures. A publication is possible.

Another ambitious project, that will have a long term effect, will be in the Old Cooksboro Cemetery, AKA Van Der Cook – Pine Cemetery. The PHS is teaming up with the Town of Pittstown Abandoned Cemetery Committee to continue the cleanup in this most historic cemetery. This cemetery was long neglected, virtually unrecognizable as a cemetery from only 100 feet away in 2005. Since then, several volunteers, including neighbors, have spent hundreds of hours to clear brush and debris. Consisting of over one acre of almost 300 gravestones and monuments, it is one of the larger abandoned cemeteries in the town. In addition to the landscape cleanup, a comprehensive recording of the stones and a map of the cemetery will be developed. A digital photograph of the stones will aid in preserving the information for future generations. Work on conservation of the gravestones, as well as, resetting of fallen stones will begin. This will be a great opportunity for community involvement. Students, civic groups, and neighbors are all welcome to participate.

If you are interested in this project, please contact Joe Ferrannini at jaferrannini@aol.com or 518-424-9562.