



# UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## March Meeting.

Although the CoVid 19 virus had preventing us from having our regular meetings, our president called for a special meeting on March 7, 2021 of the executive board to discuss several important matters that needed attention. The members met indoors at the Hanson House, complete with masks and observing social distancing.

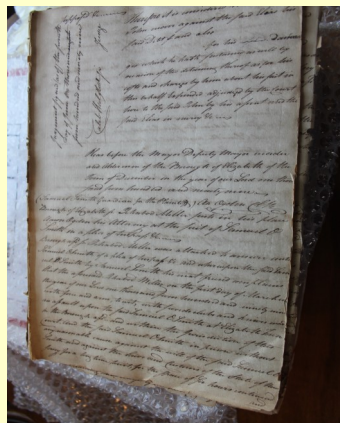
Several reports were given at the meeting and it was also agreed that we would look into the possibility of producing some programs to be given before audiences in large halls or meeting rooms.

A special feature of the meeting was the presentation of a 1799 book of common pleas, which covered several years of settlements of debts which had been incurred by certain residents of the then Borough of Elizabeth. There are many prominent names written here, such as Barber, as an attorney for an Ogden family, and a listing of many Daytons. The settlements were made before Judge Caleb Hatfield of the Court of Common Pleas. All of this was recorded back then in Essex County, long before Union County was created in 1857 from Essex County.

This beautifully hand written record describes who owed how much to whom and what settlement was made by the contestants. A debt of a few dollars was worth fighting.



This book of debts was purchased by the Union County Historical Society when it was offered for sale by its former owner.



**Ancient History**  
Union County Historical Society has been in existence for one hundred fifty two years preserving local history for the benefit of anyone who asks. Some of those requests have come from a surprising part of our country and even from distant parts of the world. Our

fame has been spreading.

Through the years we have supplied information to a woman in Texas about the Battle of Connecticut Farms, and of the Battle of Springfield where her ancestor, Stephen Bedford, had been a militiaman in both battles. We had no trouble providing the required information.

Another request came from a woman in Australia, asking about John Cummins, the first mayor of Roselle Park and his friend, Montana Bill, who was a sharpshooter, and her grandfather.

Information about Cummins was easy, and we could send even a picture of the mayor, but who was Montana Bill? We still don't know, and never heard of him.

A phone call from a woman in Blossvale, New York, asked about the old Wheatsheaf Tavern, once in Roselle. We were well aware of the former tavern of 1745, but later letters from the woman gave

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### Pictures From Our Files

It all started on Thursday, Christmas Day, in 1947, about noon when the snow began to fall, and it continued through the night and well into the afternoon of the next day. There had been no wind, and when it finally stopped there was an even layer of 25 inches covering all of Union County.

Street traffic was almost impassible, with abandoned vehicles left where they had been pushed to the curb, to be dug out later. Fortunately, the large driving wheels of the locomotives of the Central Railroad could still pull trains along their routes, but they were filled with passengers jamming the isles and riding free as the conductors could not collect any fares.

On Saturday the dig-out began, with snow-shovels in great demand. Snow-bound cars were cleared, leaving a private parking spot at the curb, and woe betide the claim-jumper who used it.

In Elizabeth on Broad Street a large snow-loader was brought into action, with a string of dump trucks to be loaded with snow. When full, each truck moved away, and was replaced by the next truck in line. The full truck dumped its load in the nearby

river and then returned to the line.

Working along the curb, the augur of the loader fed snow up onto a conveyor, where it fell into another, and from that one into the waiting truck.

However, Mother Nature was not finished with us, yet. On January 2, she gave us a freezing rainstorm that soon covered everything with ice. Falling ice from trees made walking very dangerous.

Although it had been plowed, Westfield Avenue in Elmora still had a packed down layer of frozen snow, about three to four inches thick. One day, after warning residents to move their cars, a gang of three big snowplows charged abreast along that street, clearing it to the pavement, but throwing large chunks of frozen snow onto the hand-shoveled sidewalks. Although they had cleared the street, the trucks earned no "brownie points" from any of the residents.

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us more information than we could give her.

Another phone call came from a woman named Carol Hampton, of Sheldahl, Iowa, asking for information about Andrew Hampton, one of her ancestors. We sent pictures of the house he built in 1696,

still standing with additions and modifications and known now as "Old St. John's Parsonage".

Andrew Hampton was born in Scotland and became a tailor there before coming to Elizabethtown. His name also appears in a survey book of 1737 as the owner of a lot in what is now Union County.

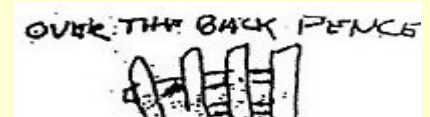


There is some question about the spelling of the name "Hampton", as there is a clay tablet in the foundation wall of the old building which spells it as "Hamton".

If Andrew made the tablet he certainly should have known the correct way to spell his name.

### HEART Grant Award

While there has been very little news to report we do have an interesting item about one of our members, Michael Yesenko, who has received a HEART grant of one thousand dollars to help provide a pictorial history of the American Revolution. Congratulations, Mike



Bill Frolich says this year the groundhog did not get to see his shadow because he was snowed-in under a foot of snow and couldn't poke his head out