

VAN HORNESVILLE COMMUNITY CORPORATION

ARCHIVES REPORT

<https://www.vhccorp.org>

Delina Ecker Filkins

MAY 4, 1815 – DECEMBER 4, 1928

Delina Ecker Filkins is buried in the Van Hornesville Cemetery. Her death at age 113 is remarkable indeed. She is known for being a supercentenarian having reached and surpassed the age of 110.

Delina Filkins, known throughout the region as Grandma Filkins, lived in Jordanville her entire life until she moved to Richfield Springs to live with her son shortly before her passing.

Married to John Filkins a local farmer, they

raised six children. A seventh child is believed to have died in infancy. The Filkins were known for their cheese making.

In her lifetime, she saw the opening of the Erie Canal at age ten and was 100 when she first rode in an automobile. She remembered the Civil War and lived through the Great War. At age 105, she was eligible to vote for the first time with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Sources: Robert Douglas Young's "113 in 1928? Validation of Delina Filkins as the First 'Second-Century Teenager'" and "State's Oldest Woman Dies at 113 Years, 4 Mos." Otsego Farmer, Dec. 7, 1928.

IN THIS EDITION

In this edition of the Archives Report, readers uncover Marie Curie's secret visit to Van Hornesville and her lasting legacy. Learn about the history and current considerations for the Robert B. Woodruff Outdoor Learning Center. Explore the buildings on the main street of Van Hornesville from the past and visit the highlights of the Class of 1951 from a yearbook perspective. Older readers familiar with the infamous Boondoggle publications will step back in time to remember the stories and the community members from their youth. In turn, the youth can discover local history while they decide if the publication really was a boondoggle.

As evidenced by the Boondoggle interviews, having true conversations with our community members leads to a shared history. The Class of 2024 now has a voice at the table with the Van Hornesville Community Corporation. These young people can help share their vision for the community. Likewise, residents have the opportunity to help keep the treasures of this little village for future generations. Working together, we can all contribute our individual talents to a better good for everyone.



CURRENT VHCC OFFICE

VAN HORNESVILLE COMMUNITY CORPORATION

The Van Hornesville Community Corporation, shown above, was established in 1938. This corporation continues to support the community of Van Hornesville through its support of the Owen D. Young Central School summer program, community events, and other local projects.

The Archives is part of the VHCC and houses Van Hornesville's historical artifacts from the Van Horne, Young, Smith, and Woodruff families to the local businesses throughout Van Hornesville's history.

FROM THE PAST

VAN HORNESVILLE BUSINESSES

A View from the Main Street

HE Miller Garage

The photo from 1925 is the H. E. Miller Garage. This building is next to the old Van Hornesville Fire Department.



Fire Department

The photo from 1930 is the Van Hornesville Fire Department. Notice the trees behind the building and the Brookside Ice Cream Parlor in the distance.

Brookside Ice Cream Parlor

The Brookside Ice Cream Parlor was located across Route 80 from the Mill Pond on the north side of the Van Hornesville Community Corporation office.



FROM THE PAST

VAN HORNESVILLE BUSINESSES

Grange Hall

The Grange Hall in Van Hornesville hosted performances including “A Woman’s Honor” in 1923 presented by the Fish and Game Club of Van Hornesville and “An Arizona Cowboy” presented by Grangers in 1924.

The original building (left) was lifted and turned in 1926 to accommodate the addition of other rooms as shown in the picture below from 1929.

Currently, the bowling alley is located where the Grange Hall once resided.



FROM THE PAST

VAN HORNESVILLE BUSINESSES



Abram Krill Store

In the 1860s, Abram Krill operated a grocery and liquor store, which was located at the northwest corner of Route 80 and Jordanville Road. At the time, businesses could use “shinplasters” or their own paper currency (right).

The photo above includes the Abe Krill family from 1857.



Young Greenhouse

Owen Young had a greenhouse where plants were sold. This was located on the east side of Otsquago Creek in the village.



CONNECTIONS WITH CURIE

MARCH 23, 1933

Text and information from the March 23, 1933 edition of *The Evening Times* "Mme. Curie Laboratory at Van Hornesville Now in Use" article by Florence Jordan.

The Madame Curie laboratory, recently completed and dedicated to the greatest living woman scientist and discoverer of radium, is now in use by the science department of our school...The room was especially designed by architect, Ernest Sibley. A copy of the plans was made and sent to Madame Curie in France. She accepted them by signing her name on the blue print, and with a letter of explanation, returned them to Mr. Young, in whose possession both now are. A picture of the famous radium discoverer together with the letter in her own handwriting will be framed and hung on one of the walls in the science room.

MAY 23, 1980

On May 23, 1980, Josephine Young Case, daughter of Owen D. Young, gave a speech at a tree planting to honor Marie Curie's visit to the Van Hornesville School fifty years prior. Curie's trip to the United States was for the 50th anniversary celebration of the incandescent lamp by Thomas Edison and to receive a check for \$50,000 to buy a gram of radium to give Poland, her native country. Below is an excerpt from the speech.

...To us of course her visits in New York State were most important, especially the one to the Van Hornesville School. Owen Young and Mme. Curie were old acquaintances, although they met first on that 1929 visit. Since 1925 he had seen to it that any laboratory equipment which she needed and the General Electric Company could provide was given to her without charge. In return she sent little hand-written notes of gratitude, bits of paper with tiny writing in English, for she wrote and spoke English well. She was indeed a very small person, not higher than my shoulder; and her body was crippled and her hands deformed by her work with dangerous substances. But this you did not notice when you met her; you noticed her smile, the light in her eyes, the warmth of her manner. One of her daughters said of her that she had "an inner radiance, enthusiastic stubbornness, a secret grace."

Owen Young took her to the General Electric Laboratory in Schenectady; there, on her own ground, she became so excited by what she saw and heard, and asked so many questions, that she was totally exhausted. The streets of Schenectady were lined with people who had gathered to catch a glimpse of her. To get her away for a day's rest, Owen Young whisked her off to his favorite place -- Van Hornesville. Here she had a good rest and a quiet visit with him and his mother. My grandmother was then about 90 and Marie Curie about 60; these two wonderful women, of such different backgrounds, took to each other at once - a friendship of admiration and affection. Then in the morning the three of them went in heavy rain here to the School to plant the tree that commemorated the occasion.

And then of course he showed her the School - although then there was only the one small building. But ODY promised her that when a Science Laboratory was built it should be named for her. We have no good photos of that morning, for it was a secret visit; the press and photographers had dogged her so that ODY wanted to keep them away - and anyway, it was too wet...

...And here she stood, on a dark day in October 1929, looking forward, with Owen Young, to the education in science of the girls and boys of the Van Hornesville School.

FROM THE PAST

CONNECTIONS AT SCHOOL

From the Otsquagan 1951 Yearbook

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, author of *The Yearling* and *The Sojourner*, spent time in Van Hornesville writing. She was a friend of Owen D. Young and visited the school. In the 1951 yearbook, she wrote the following:

"What has most impressed me about the Van Hornesville School is neither its rare beauty nor the financial value of its gift, but the confidence expressed by Owen D. Young, one of the greatest men of our times, in you, the younger generation of your particular section of these United States, as potential idealists and responsible, thinking citizens. I share his confidence, and am happy as well to have a small share in your community life."

From the same publication, Owen D. Young shared his thoughts.

"What are the things most familiar to you which others less familiar with them envy most?

I suggest that we each individually make our own list and then analyze and appraise each item to see whether, because of familiarity, we have undervalued or the envious, with less familiarity, have overvalued."

Boys Sports

Varsity Football -- Coach Shalk
Junior Varsity Football -- Mr. Killian
Wrestling -- Coach Schalk
Ski Club -- Mr. Romeling
Tennis -- Mr. Romeling
Baseball -- Coach Shalk

Girls Sports

Soccer

This has been the year for upsets. Notre Dame was defeated by Purdue; Oklahoma in the Cotton bowl by Kentucky; Army by Navy; and the biggest upset of the year -- Van Hornesville Soccer Team by Richfield with a score of 4-2. This was Van Hornesville's first defeat in three years.

Softball

Nellie Mead was high scorer for the season with a total of seventeen points. The "Blue Jeans" softball team, under the direction of Leonard Workman is boasting the return of several veterans from last year's team, and they've had their eye on the league championship. We have been undefeated for three years and we would like to change the trend toward big upsets by being undefeated this year.

FROM THE PAST

BOONDOGGLE?

Boondoggle?

...The Mohawk Valley, Then and Now

Twenty students at the Owen D. Young School under the leadership of Paul Bensen with a grant from the Regional Board of Cooperative Education Services researched, interviewed, wrote, edited, and printed their stories in the *Boondoggle?* publication.

These students wrote articles about ghosts, farming, one-room school houses, courting, everyday life, and native recipes. They interviewed five craftspeople: Bart Brush, Gene Vale, "Skin" Barscheid, Nan Rick, and John Robinson for the 1975 edition.

From Boondoggle's humble beginnings, a group of junior high students continued the tradition with the publication of Jr. Boondoggle? in 1986. For one of the articles, Kristin Hectus and Kathy Thomson interviewed former ODY teachers Altana Doig, Shirley Elwood, Mildred Hubiak, and Marion Allen for their article "Recollections of Old Mother Nature."

Mildred Hubiak remembered the winter of 1946-1947. The snow was so bad Mr. Woodruff cancelled school. At the time, most of the single women teachers lived at Aunt Catherine's house. Mrs. Hubiak recalled that Betty Kuzmak dug a tunnel to the school to access the cafeteria, but the ladies had to cook on the fireplace in their living space.

Marion Allen recalled the winter of 1956-1957. The students in Jordanville were transported via Richfield Springs because the Jordanville Road was impassable for a duration because of the drifts of snow. The farmers could not get their milk to market, but some were able to travel through the fields to deliver it.

Jr. Boondoggle?

Staff Members

Diane Armstrong	Richard Packard
Denise Bond	Thomas Rudd
Kristin Hectus	Aaron Smith
Katherine Jackson	Kathleen Thomson
Russell Jordan	Stayce Toner
Kimberly Luke	John Valenta

Boondoggle?

Staff Members

Dan Collings	Steve Mayton
Nancy Eysaman	Linda Pratt
Heidi Forrest	Amy Putnam
Kathleen Fusco	Joe Putnam
Marybeth Getman	Lisa Remp
Paul Hectus	Cindy Richardson
Amanda Keach	Mark Steenburg
Jeff Landers	Alex Zaleski
Karen Manning	Maryann Zaleski
Mark Mayton	

Boondoggle: a wasteful or impractical project or activity often involving graft

MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY

TO THE PRESENT

ODY SENIORS AND VHCC OPPORTUNITIES

At the November 4, 2023 VHCC Members' Meeting, the bylaws were changed regarding rising and graduating ODYS Senior to enable them opportunities to participate in serving the local Van Hornesville community with the VHCC.

Students entering their senior year at the Owen D. Young School District are automatically granted membership for 16 months, starting on the 1st of September their senior year. These senior members have full voting privileges and can serve on all committees as their interests and talents dictate.

Following graduation from ODYS, this group is automatically granted membership in the VHCC for the following calendar year. They too have full voting privileges and can serve on all committees as their interests and talents dictate.

The Board can appoint a rising ODYS Senior to serve as a non-voting, advisory Board member. This appointee will be eligible to receive a scholarship award as determined by the Board.

The members are hopeful our community's young people will participate in VHCC activities. This connection will help keep both our community and our organization strong.

These rising and graduating seniors can help on any of the various VHCC Committees: events, horticulture, membership, website, fundraising, and archives.

Please visit the VHCC website for more information.
vhccorp.org

ROBERT B. WOODRUFF OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER

The Outdoor Learning Center was formally started in the summer of 1984 when a replacement bridge was built by members of the 464th Engineering Battalion of the U.S. Army Reserve. Janet Nevins Young, wife of Richard Young, was the driving force behind this movement.

Charles Watkins researched the area, and under the supervision of David DeLaney and a steering committee of community volunteers, work crews of students (sponsored by the Herkimer County Summer Youth Program) began the process to clear paths, build bridges and picnic tables, and preserve artifacts.

The Outdoor Learning Center was renamed and dedicated to Robert B. Woodruff (1909-1995) for his support to the school. He was a Van Hornesville resident for more than 60 years, and he was a teacher, coach, and principal at the Van Hornesville/Owen D. Young Central School District.

The VHCC owns the property where the Outdoor Learning Center stands. The usage of the nature center increased significantly during Covid. Weather has taken a toll on some of the areas/paths, and the bathrooms have been problematic.

This community treasure needs input from the residents about the future of the place. Managing and maintaining the facilities takes both time and money. For the school community, the town, and the members of the VHCC to work together on this project is critical for the survival of one of the best features of this area.

How can you help? Contact the VHCC to let them know how you can offer assistance. Do you see the Outdoor Learning Center as a valuable community asset? If so, participate in its preservation. Working together, we can save this natural treasure for future generations.

VHCC COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES

VHCC UPDATES

The Van Hornesville Community Corporation (VHCC) founded in 1938 by Owen D. Young is a not-for-profit educational and charitable corporation whose goals are to promote the well-being of the residents of Van Hornesville and the nearby neighborhood.

The VHCC Board of Directors meet regularly, and the membership meets bi-annually each May and November. General updates to the membership are shared via email. The VHCC welcomes new members who would like a say in how this community looks and functions, and they welcome members and volunteers who want to maintain and improve this community. Membership is \$25 for an individual or \$35 for a family.

The VHCC has made updates to many of the buildings it owns, from the post office and food pantry, to the office and Millpond Community Center. A small group of dedicated members also coordinated the task to replace the streetlights in the village. Currently, the organization is looking for community input regarding the old feed mill and the Outdoor Learning Center.

VHCC Board of Directors

- President: Bob Ciernia
- Vice-President: Mike Marshall
- Secretary: Susan Williams
- Treasurer: Dave DeLaney
- Member: Brennan Fahey

Visit the website at www.vhccorp.org for more information, to make a donation, or to join.



Sketch by Donna Veeder

Donna Veeder

February 7, 1933 – January 16, 2024

Known locally for her many drawings of the Van Hornesville area some of which were published in the VHCC calendars, Donna organized various art shows through the VHCC and gathered artists to display their works. Last year, she presented to the high school seniors for their local history project. Donna shared her passion for art, writing, local history, and teaching with people of all ages.

COMMUNITY VOICES

COMMUNITY INPUT REQUESTED

The Van Hornesville Community Corporation wants to hear your thoughts, hopes, and dreams about the common future of our community.

- What are the best things about the area?
- What are things about the area that you want to remain the same in coming years?
- What improvements would you make to the area?
- What businesses would you like to see here?
- When you invite people to visit, where do you take them for activities and entertainment?
- What does our community need that could be housed in the Old Stone Mill, or what is the best use of that building?
- What changes would you make at the Woodruff Outdoor Learning Center?
- What other thoughts or concerns do you have?

We would love to hear from you. Please share your thoughts. Contact us at board@vhccorp.org or speak to a Board member.

As the organization responsible for a number of local properties including the Mill and the Robert B. Woodruff Outdoor Learning Center, our goal is to serve this community. This is much easier to do when ideas are shared, discussed, and acted on together!

Community: The people with common interests living in a particular area

MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY

Local History Fair

April 13, 2024

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Join us at the VHCC Office for an afternoon of historical exploration. Learn about the people, places, and events including the Starkville Champions 4-H Club, obituaries of local residents, and photos from days gone by. Bring a friend on this historical adventure.



Van Horne Mills



The picture above from 1930 is the first fire truck of Van Hornesville in front of the Mill.