

THE STOCKADE SPY

VOLUME III NUMBER 7

PUBLISHED MONTHLY IN SCHENECTADY, NEW YORK

APRIL, 1963

STOCKADE TOURS

By Appointment

Apply Hotel Van Curler FR 4-4431

Well informed guides will conduct walking tours of 8-12 people through our Historic Area. This community service is available seven days a week during day-light hours.

Donation of 50c (25c twelve years or under)

Tours will start at Hotel Van Curler and take about an hour

FRIENDS OF THE STOCKADE

Mrs. J. W. Joyce, Chairman

EX 3-8622

STOCKADE TOURS INC.

Friends of the Stockade officially announce the start of guided tours of the Stockade. A flyer giving the details of the arrangements necessary is reproduced in this issue. This flyer is included in the brochure entitled "A Walking Tour of Schenectady". The Hotel Van Curler, Historical Society, Chamber of Commerce, History Center, International General Electric, Union College, and Real Estate Agents will carry copies of this brochure and inserted flyer.

The staff of the Hotel Van Curler, specifically Mr. Bertin Bowman, will handle the bookings for tours. Mrs. Arthur Covert is the publicity agent for the project. The guides, Mrs. Maurice Norton, Mrs. John Watrous, Mrs. Robert George, and Mrs. Robert Kambour, have been trained by Mrs. Marie Cormack, and Mr. J. Warren Joyce.

HART'S TOPIC

SCHENECTADY IN CIVIL WAR TIMES

On Tuesday evening, April 9, Clarence C. Hart will speak at the Historical Society on what life was like in Schenectady in 1865. April 9, 1963 is the 98th anniversary of the surrender of Lee at Appomatox.

It is the life and times of Schenectadians that will concern Mr. Hart, not particularly the battles of the Civil War, although curiously enough a chief source of information is the diary of one Captain Charles F. Lewis, a native of Schenectady who enlisted in the service from Schenectady and who rose to the rank of Captain in the ensuing conflict. Lewis wrote of his furloughs in Schenectady, the train ride to and from, and other interesting details. The diary of Jonathan Pearson will also be referred to.

Mr. Hart, a staff reporter of the Schenectady Gazette, is an active trustee of the Historical Society. His articles for the newspaper reflect his interest in history and politics. Mr. Hart will mention in his talk the type of newspaper coverage in 1865 and the political climate of a Democratic Schenectady, 1865.

WATCH ON THE MOHAWK

For the past three weeks the City Department of Engineering and Public Works, Division of Sewage Treatment under Clifford E. Irving, Superintendent, has kept a 24 hourly watch on the level of the Mohawk River, from its foot gauges at the end of Ferry Street. State Weather Bureau communications on the possible flood situation have originated from these observations. By March 29 the ice jam had cleared the Schenectady area and possibility of heavy rainfall remained the only deterrent to an orderly run-off for spring 1963.

The normal level of the Mohawk at the end of Ferry Street is 212.5 feet above sea level; flood level is 223 feet above sea level. This spring the maximum footage above sea level recorded at Ferry Street was 221.75. Mr. Irving pointed to the effective cooperation that exists between City and State authorities concerned with this problem. The State regulates the flood gates at Vischer's Ferry and these gates when opened allow a large amount of water to pass. The gates were opened for several days during the critical period. Barge traffic is expected to resume shortly: the River must be low enough for barges to pass under bridges.

LINTON LIMELIGHTS

TOP, Linton's annual talent show was recently enhanced by the talented performance of Christine Ferluge. Performing before a sellout crowd, Chris sang the part of a little girl in a take-off on "Do, Re, Me", was featured in "Chris at the Keyboard", and sang with the Serenaders, a school choral organization.

- Chuck Lasky

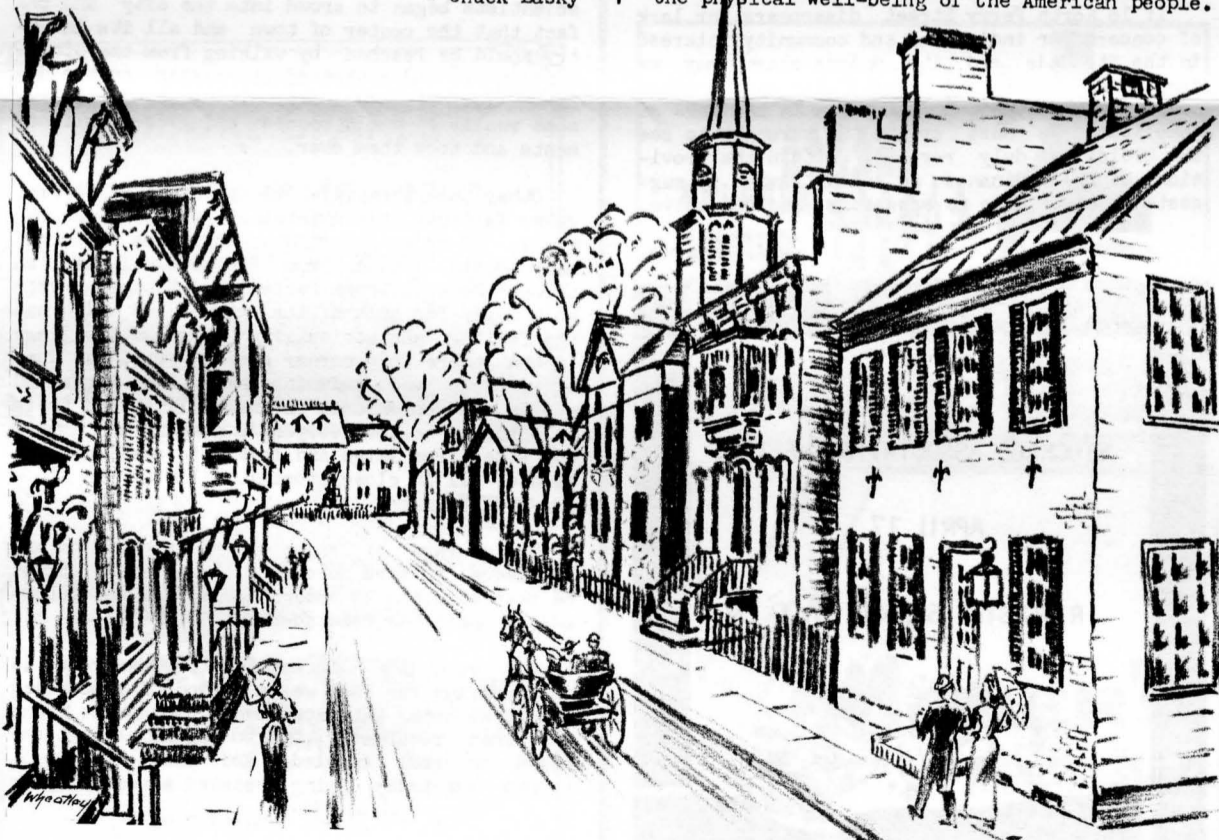
PLANS FOR TREE PLANTING BLOSSOM

At the April 17th meeting of the Association Mr. Walter Durniac, County Agricultural Agent, will speak on the general topic of landscaping and garden maintenance with emphasis on tree planting, growth and care. This program is in direct connection with the Spring 1963 tree-planting drive which Mrs. George Braden will handle for the Association. Mr. Durniac will welcome all questions from the floor on any aspect of this subject.

Mrs. Braden will be scanning the neighborhood for bare spots, and knocking on doors to ask if the residents would be interested in planting a sidewalk tree. All work is expected to be completed by the middle of May. Mrs. Braden, who was the very successful tree-planting chairman in 1961, does not expect the total cost of a tree, planted, to be more than \$15.00. The excavation costs in this project when incurred are paid by the Association. To quote a headline in March of 1961, "Mrs. Braden Says 'Trees, Please'".

RIVERSIDE OPEN HOUSE

Riverside School will hold its annual Open House on Tuesday, April 9, starting at 1:00 p.m. The school and individual classrooms will be open to parents and community friends so that they may visit and observe, in particular, how the health and physical fitness program at Riverside is extended and developed in the classroom program. On the same day there is an after-school "play" or "gym" time and visitors are welcome to observe this program which is conducted throughout the year by the physical education resource teacher, Mr. Kenneth Johnson. "Health and physical fitness" has been chosen for emphasis during the school spring term as a development of the growing public concern about the physical well-being of the American people.





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Published by the Stockade Association

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THE CASE IN POINT

The March issue of the Spy carried a very provocative and interesting letter by Mrs. Edith Norris. The specific motivation behind the writing of this letter is the projected demolition of the Lyon House at 16 North Ferry Street. The history behind this spirited attempt by Mrs. Norris to reinform the residents of this impending disaster is significant enough for review.

On June 13, 1962 a demolition permit was requested by St. George's Episcopal Church for 16 North Ferry Street. In accordance with the recently adopted Historic Zoning Ordinance the request was referred to the Historic District Commission which, within the limits of the Ordinance, considers such requests. The Ordinance states it is in the public interest to preserve those structures built in the Stockade area after 1825 which the Commission determines to be of historic, architectural, and aesthetic importance. The Ordinance allows only a stay of demolition for items in this category; a year in which parties concerned would attempt a compromise.

Considerable public opinion was aroused in an attempt to have St. George's withdraw its request. A petition signed by 350 people ---200 residents of the Stockade ---- was sent to the vestry of the Church. A letter from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington attesting to the historic value of the property was also presented. Ellen Scott of the Times Union in Albany presented a stirring feature article in defense of preservation. Local papers carried news articles of the controversy. Several purchase offers in amounts in excess of the price at which the Church acquired the property were sent to the vestry by interested individuals. All were promptly refused.

On July 1, 1962 the Historic District Commission denied the application for demolition and issued its stay of one year. St. George's Church, perhaps in an attempt to quiet the controversy decided not to appeal the decision although it had maintained the Ordinance was "unsound and illegal". On July 30, 1962 the city building inspector's office issued a permit for demolition effective June 13, 1963.

If 16 North Ferry Street disappears for lack of concern for individual and community interest in the Stockade and its unique charm, may we have cause to blame ourselves for such a weakness in the Historic Ordinance. In the wake of demolition we must create the strength to see the Ordinance duly revised. Within the provisions of the Ordinance an annual review is suggested, let us make it mandatory, and effective.

- V. Kambour.

STOCKADE ASSOCIATION MEETING

APRIL 17

RIVERSIDE SCHOOL, 8:00 PM



STICKS AND STONES

The Stockade Area has always been THE place to live in Schenectady. As true as this statement is, it is only true for many different reasons, and for many different types of people. Originally of course it was THE place to live because it was the only place that offered physical protection, in the form of a wooden wall, that kept out the first settlers' enemies. During the Revolution and throughout the early years of the Republic, the Stockade, by reasons of its location became a place of much commercial consequence. Early Ship commerce made it the foot of navigation for the west country and the important merchant and shipbuilding families erected their homes where their businesses were. The ferries and later the bridges crossing the river made this area desirable because of its accessibility to transportation and trade. At the turn of the 18th Century when Union College was founded in the Stockade, students, scholars and professors began to flood the available rooms and houses and a new type established roots and made history here. Dr. Eliphalet Nott and Governor Joseph Yates were familiar personages on Stockade streets at this time.

The historic Fire of 1819 gutted most of the shipbuilding and commercial houses in the area and in one afternoon changed the physical plan of the town. The burned-out business places were rebuilt further uptown, near where the Erie Canal was soon to be and in their stead some of our finest residences were built along the river and up Union Street.

The two major events that dominated Schenectady History from the Great Fire to the Civil War were the Erie Canal and the organization of railroads. Neither of these touched the Stockade directly but both operated on its perimeters and people important to these events built many elegant homes such as the great house on Ferry Street for Chauncey Vibbard, the first superintendent of the New York Central.

The consequent development of Industry and Commerce outside of the Stockade left the Area an isolated island of residences where the major cultural and social life of the community developed. During this period until World War II a number of row houses were built, many of dubious quality, as well as some large houses that are very much in the fashion of the times. While this new construction was going on, many of the fine old homes were being "modernized" with new fronts, razed, or allowed to deteriorate through neglect. While the area ran downhill and slums appeared it never went so far as to be a slum as a whole. There were those with great wealth, professional people, merchants and others who took pride in their property and formed a stable core.

Probably due to World War II the Stockade began to be rediscovered and rejuvenated. Professionals, lawyers, artists, and G.E. engineers and scientists began to crowd into the city and the fact that the center of town and all its industry could be reached by walking from the Stockade clearly had a tremendous bearing on the desirability of the location. These people saw some really fine old houses being used as tenements and took them over.

Other than proximity to Center-city several other factors gave impetus to the Stockade revival. Of major importance - the area still had many houses dating from Pre-Revolutionary on through Federal, Greek Revival and Victorian eras as a basis for much of its charm. It also had the feeling and sociability of a small village in that there were corner stores, the Civic Theater, parks and swimming pools that projected warmth and convenience in informality. And there were houses to fit everyone's needs: all shapes and sizes, from large and formal to small and intimate, all in close proximity lining the winding streets.

The courage of those who had the vision and knowledge to move into a declining area cannot be overestimated in understanding how the Stockade of today has come about.

But even the Stockade of the War years is disappearing for this was a period of remodeling the great homes into apartments. Today the trend has been reversed. Due to strong convictions based on real knowledge and taste the great houses are today being restored essentially as

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Mrs. Norris' excellent letter to the editor in the last Spy brings to mind once again something that should have been "with" us throughout the winter. I mean, of course, the proposed destruction of the Lyon House this June. Time is getting short. As Mrs. Norris asked, "What is the trouble? What is wrong with us?" I query- what are we going to do about it? Are we going to smile politely and watch as the bulldozers come one fine morning to demolish in a few hours a house that has been standing one hundred years? Or are we going to make it more advantageous for St. George's Church to either use the Lyon House for its own purpose (standing), or sell it to one of several persons who has offered to buy it with the express purpose of living in it?

Because the purpose of the Stockade Association is to preserve Old Schenectady, 'tis up to each and every member of the Association to consider himself a part of the "we" and do something about the Lyon House. But let's not wait too long, nor make another half-hearted attempt. What is needed is a hue and cry that won't be easily forgotten.

- Gretchen J. Koch



National Trust for Historical Preservation
 815 17th St. N.W. Washington 6, D.C.

July 6, 1962

Historic District Commission
 Room 1
 City Hall
 Schenectady, N.Y.

Gentlemen:

It has come to our attention through concerned members of our organization in Schenectady that the distinguished Lyons house at 16 No. Ferry St. in the Historic District may be demolished at the request of St. George's Church.

We have been pleased that Schenectady is the first city in New York to establish an historic district under the enabling legislation passed this year in your state. An historic district is of great value to a city, and in turn is a great deal more than the sum of its parts. No city has ever been established at one date, any more than its population is all of one age.

In the growth of fine districts in our early cities, the additions of various periods have reflected changing tides of taste. We are now at an era when the handsome, exuberant, large and well constructed houses of the Victorian era are becoming extremely rare. Most of them were built in urban areas, and no longer serve as town houses of the wealthy. The space they occupy becomes valuable and a thoughtless community permits their razing without regard to the quality they add to an old area, or consideration of their continuing use and value.

From a study of the records and photographs, The Lyons House built during the Civil War by Chauncey Vibbard, first superintendent of the New York Central Railroad, is a house of high architectural quality and an addition to its neighborhood. We should like to see thoughtful consideration given to retaining it in this historic area.

The National Trust, as a non-profit educational organization, chartered by Congress, but supported wholly by private dues and donations, is aware of the tremendous value to the city and nation of legislation designed to conserve the fast-vanishing quality and character of the urban scene of our earlier cities. We assure you that the value to cities exercising such planning wisdom are not only cultural and historical but economic as well.

In the creation of the Old Stockade area it is regrettable that wider protection was not extended to all buildings of architectural quality in that section. For your information we are enclosing the National Trust's "Criteria" for Evaluating Historic Sites and Buildings" under which the Lyons House qualifies without question. The more so as the building is in an area where the preponderance of buildings are of good quality and of nineteenth-century design.

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Robert R. Garvey, Jr.
 Executive Director

RING AROUND THE INDIAN

Stockade residents have a very personal concern for what is their particular concept of the "Stockade". This concept evolves partly from the physical environment whether it is Ferry Street, Riverside Park, or the Yates House on Union Street. Discussion of possible changes to the Indian Park should be brought to the attention of all interested persons.

The wrought-iron fence ringing the Indian Park is periodically battered by careless drivers, and the City tries to play King's Men to Humpty Dumpty. The question may involve whether a stone wall made from the huge stones from the walls of the old Canal might be more suitable. (Although of historic interest these slabs are costly to move). There is also discussion about paying to have a thorough professional repair job done on the fence. Ring around the Indian - Iron or Stone?



FOUR PENCE FOR A CROW

Crows have been a nuisance to corn-growing farmers in this area for over one hundred and fifty years. There have been a number of ways in which farmers have tried to cope with this problem as well. Back in 1780 the authorities, by law granted four pence for the shooting of a large crow and two pence for the shooting of a young crow. Correct figures were kept when the crows were duly presented, counted and beheaded. Last summer Stockaders were annoyed by what turned out to be a periodic bang triggered by a mechanical device set up by a Scotia farmer trying to frighten away crows of 1962. Moral: Twentieth century farmers are more humane - or shades of Rachel Carson.



What's New:
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STICKS AND STONES

one-family homes again. This past Winter has seen a dozen neglected buildings restored as fine residential properties. Ferry, Union, Front and North Streets have particularly benefited from a new surge of activity. These restorations clearly show what can be accomplished by strong-minded individuals toward the preservation of the Historic Stockade District - still after 300 years THE place to live in Schenectady.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- April 17 Schenectady Museum Union College
New York Chamber Players
- April 18 Octavo Singers
Union College Memorial Chapel
Bloch's Sacred Service
8:00 p.m.
- April 19 Museum Concert Series
"Jewish Religious Music"
- April 20 Albany League of Arts
New York Shakespeare Festival
"Macbeth" - Page Auditorium
Albany
Mat. Tickets \$1.00 Eve. \$2.00.
- April 21 7th Annual Bal de Musee
Schenectady Museum
- April 23 Schenectady Symphony Orchestra
Leslie Parnas, soloist.
- April 25 Albany League of Arts
Metropolitan Opera Society
"Cosi Fan Tutti" Page Aud.
- April 30 Benefit Concert Retarded Children
Michael Buturtinsky, soloist.
Unitarian Social Hall
- May 5-11 Civic Players Production
"The Matchmaker"
- May 15-18 Light Opera Co., Inc.
"Where's Charley"

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PROPS, PLEASE

Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker* will appear on The Playhouse stage the week of May 6- 11 and rehearsals are already well underway.

Four Stockaders are actively working on the production: Front Street's Joe Fava as a member of the cast; Ferry Street's Margaret Eighmey as Assistant Director; Green Street's Jo Braden as Props Chairman; and Ferry Street's Mildred Ey as Chairman of Costumes. Incidentally, Jo is sending out an urgent plea to all Stockaders, asking that they check their attics, cellars, closets, etc. for the following hard-to-find period objects:

- a large aspidistra plant,
- a full-length bead curtain,
- a six-foot bird cage,
- a wicker trunk or dress-basket,
- a roll-top desk.

(She also wants a 6-foot cab horse whip and a wooden wine-cooler on wheels, but she doubts that even our well-appointed Historic District houses contain items as outré as these!)

The lovely spruce that still stands in the Indian park makes one wish there really was a tree there. With thanks to Mrs. John Wisneski of Gould Drive in Scotia for our Christmas to Easter decoration.

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The Theatre

A DESOLATE BIT OF MUSIC



The Schenectady Civic Players' production of **Five Finger Exercise**, March 18 through 23d written by young British playwright Peter Shaffer, was rare meat without potatoes for any adult audience, regardless of nationality. Few plays in modern theater are as stark as Shaffer's picture of five tortured people in a family group, and seldom have the Civic Players created such exciting theater for this area.

If you have trouble getting people to understand you, **Five Finger Exercise** would sample some of the ultimate difficulties for you. If you find it impossible to communicate your emotional needs to those closest to you, this play might give you sympathy but not much comfort.

A mother (played by Marian Stewart), a father (Al Zink), a son (Robert Boggs), a daughter (Carol Robbins) and her tutor (Hans Klebe) have urgent needs for understanding from those they love and for two spellbinding acts they hunt for it. As their needs for each other become more demanding, the harm they do to each other increases. Few theater-goers who witnessed the Church Street performance went away unshaken.

Al Zink was perhaps too understandable a person as the mercantile father. Marian Stewart was perhaps not sympathetic enough as the arty and overdramatized mother. But what they do between them to their son is as brilliant a piece of acting by Bob Boggs as any professional troupe in the country can hope for.

Hans Klebe, a newcomer to the Playhouse stage, handled the subtlety of his character with a fine piece of theatre understatement necessary to effect the innocence and contrast which the part required. Carol Robbins, a high school senior, has almost the very polish of a professional actress. Although not a particularly demanding role, it was important to be handled expertly as the audience focused desperately on this bit of comic relief.

Betsy Morray directed the show. Mary Bee produced it. They can be well proud of the results of their thoughtful and difficult work. The set by Jack Updyke, Ted Cooke, and Russell Mason -- there was only one -- served its function beautifully: it gave a highly-flexible instrument for five actors to use throughout two long acts that never bored the audience.

Some theater is fun, some is hilarious, some is relaxing, some is just pompous and dull. The Civic Players' offering of **Five Finger Exercise** came near none of these. It stretched its audience, poked sticks at it, pulled at its loyalties and sympathies. It played a desolate bit of music for 20th century audiences, but more of this kind of theatre should be tried.

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PIECES OF STRING TOO SHORT TO SAVE



Bah! Humbug - Diamonds and Sweet Peas! The second quarter of the 1963 Game hath begun! APRIL a month of great beginnings - The Father of American Democracy, Thomas Jefferson, began his illustrious career April 13, 1743 ... The Revolutionary War began April 19th in '75 ... and the Spanish-American War April 21, 1898. Ironically, the 1st U.S. Newspaper was published, in Boston, in April of 1690, and 'tis with high hopes that New York City and Cleveland Newspapers will be republishing in April of 1963 Also, the TULIPS are beginning to poke up through their winter-worm blanket in front of the First Reformed Church.

AND .. Here comes Peter Cottontail, hopping down the bunny trail, Hippity, Hoppity, Easter's on its way .. Haven't seen my Easter Bonnet yet, tho - guess I'll have to unsheath my needle -

Know you that the avocado is RICH in phosphorus? .. nourishes brain cells - hence "BRAIN FOOD" .. also rich in chlorine (the cleaner) and the Beauty mineral silicon .. so very necessary for growth of hair, nails, and teeth; makes the eyes bright; and keeps the skin from getting flabby.. and you won't gain an ounce if you don't eat six a day .. Try mashed on hot whole wheat toast or English Muffins instead of butter - I like -

If you are still Easter-Egging-it at your house, get out the paint brushes and food coloring, and make some fancy plaids, polka-spots or funny faces after the hard-boileds have been plain "Chick-Chicked" .. AND DON'T forget NAMES! .. Then when you get tired of picking up bits of shell all over the house, denude several and drop into a bowl of pickled beets to serve with your Easter Ham- My Grandmother used to do this, my mother still does (I think), and I do .. try it .. they look gorgeous and taste likewise!

Then - to use your leftover ham - make a "Ham-Turkey Pie with Biscuits" -

Combine 2 cans mushroom soup with 1 cup of milk, 1/2 teaspoon of marjoram, 1/2 teaspoon thyme, 1/2 cup chopped onion and a cup of chopped celery. Pour half of this mixture into a buttered 3-quart casserole. Top with 2 cups diced cooked ham and 2 cups diced cooked turkey (or chicken) and 1 pkg. cooked frozen green peas. Pour over remaining soup mixture. Arrange Biscuits (recipe on pkg.) or your own favorite recipe .. at least a dozen or so, on top. Brush with melted butter and sprinkle with poppy seeds. Bake in a moderate oven (350) for about 30 minutes, or until mixture bubbles and the Biscuits are done. Serves six lusty appetites nicely.

And on the third day He Arose .. Blessed Easter-tide!

- Cae Van Vorst

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Dear Dorothy:

Practically nothing has happened in the Stock -ade area this month. Some of us have tried fighting the flu or "the bug" or whatever you want to call it and all of us have fought the elements in the hope that Spring was not far away.

It's here and the weatherman assures us there shouldn't be any serious flooding so there is much rejoicing.

Admiral W.A.V. Kitts, U.S.N. (Ret.) and Mrs. Kitts, 19 Front Street, are back after spending the Winter in New Mexico, Oklahoma and California with their children.

All the skiers are hoping for just one more weekend! Barbara Glenn, Karen Eustice and Lynn Sprague were among the lucky ones who spent a week skiing at Gray Rock Inn in Canada.

That seems to be it for this month. We hope some of our travelers will be back next month to liven it up.

Affectionately,

Ginnie

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