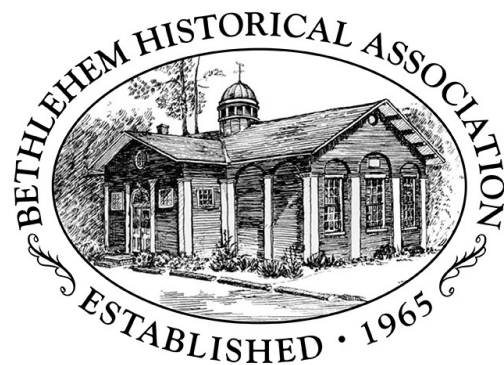


Bethlehem Historical Association

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2020



Bethlehem and the 1918-1919 Influenza Pandemic

By Chris Philippo

The COVID-19 pandemic makes it impossible for the history-minded not to think and wonder about Bethlehem during the 1918-19 pandemic. The ability to do research at Town Hall or the State Library and Archives is currently restricted. (Members are encouraged to look at their own old family letters, diaries, business records etc. and tell us if they find anything.)

According to the *Encyclopedia of New York State*, the first reported cases were in the Merchant Mariners in New York harbor on September 13, 1918. Within two weeks, it had spread as far north as Saratoga County mostly related to military personnel and their transports.

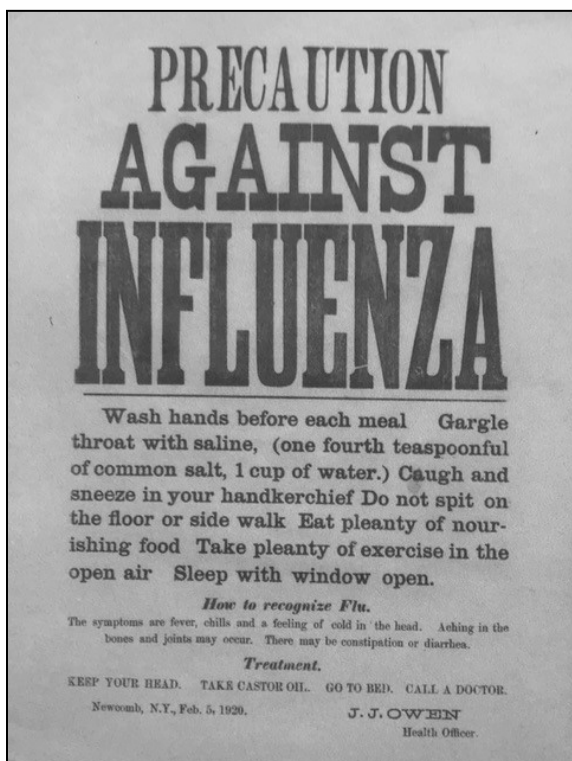
From September 17 to November 30, 1918, Albany County had 762 deaths attributed to influenza, 226 to pneumonia. Of those, only 81 were reported in rural areas including Bethlehem. Unless Bethlehem was badly hit in a later period of the epidemic, it would appear to have been largely spared considering how large the rural area was at that time.

Much of what appeared in Albany and Altamont newspapers pertaining to Bethlehem was notices of people who were sick, several of whom were treated by Dr. Irving VanWoert, Sr. (1895 – 1974) who had just graduated from Albany Medical College in 1917.

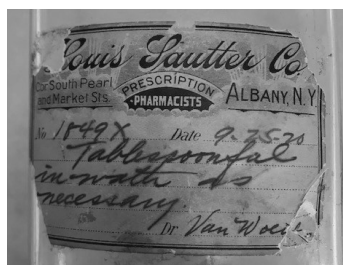
Very little relevant to what precautions were taken in town or what life was like as a consequence of the virus has been found thus far. There are notices of school closings and re-openings, cancellations and postponements of social organizations.

TOP: A poster from Newcomb, N.Y. dated February 5, 1920.
 MIDDLE: A photo from the 50 year reunion of the Albany Medical College of Class of 1917. Dr. Irving Van Woert is seated on the far right of this photo.
 BOTTOM: A label from a medicine that Dr. Van Woert prescribed September 25, 1920.

The story continues on page 4.



William B. Coughtry has been quite sick with influenza the past week, and under the care of Dr. Van Woert.



Inside this issue...

The Pandemic of 1918-19
 Presidents Annual Report
 Slingerlands Artist Edward Buyck

BHA Annual Report 2020

Submitted by Karen Beck, President

This was a most unusual year for the Bethlehem Historical Association. While we experienced unprecedented disruptions to our program, we completed significant improvements to the facility.

In May, just as we were about to initiate a planned restoration of the back room, a friable asbestos situation was confirmed in the basement. The Town assumed responsibility for the removal. The basement was ordered off limits. The required procurement process was initiated, but the abatement did not take place until November which in turn delayed the restoration work until December.

The restoration project included carpentry, electrical upgrades, improved lighting for exhibits, installation of school lights, floor repair, and painting.

Although the museum was on pause, we continued to be active in every other way. Four successful lectures took place at the Delmar Reformed church. BHA was a presence at all eight indoor Farmers Markets. The newsletters went out. The Election Day bake sale took place. Membership increased. Committees met. The Trustees updated our by-laws. Documentation and organization of collections took place as possible.

In March, plans for the remaining spring lectures, the museum opening, the Afternoon Tea, the annual dinner, and the Ice Cream Social were in place. Then Covid-19 brought BHA - and the world - to a halt.

It was decided to make the best of things by taking advantage of the enforced closing. While following recommended social distancing guidelines, we emptied, then cleaned the interior of the front room, had the room painted and some carpentry work done. The windows were washed inside and out.

At this time, as we try prepare for an unknown future, we wonder when we will reopen and what changes will need to be made when we do. We are eager to open the doors to a brighter, cleaner, more historically accurate museum. We are working on new, engaging exhibits. Also, optimistically, we have programs and events pending. History is always in the making !

Throughout the year, many members gave time and talent to the Bethlehem Historical Association. What follows is a necessarily brief, frankly inadequate, acknowledgement of their commitment and accomplishments.

Officers

President Karen Beck

Vice President Sharon Sestak

Recording Secretary Nancy Newkirk

Corresponding Secretary Jan Cornell

Treasurer MaryAnn Shubert

Trustees

Tim Beebe, Deborah Croscup, Vicki Folger, Carl Gutman
Chris Philipppo, Dawn Pratt, Bill Seyler

Committees

Facility: Buildings and Grounds Bill Seyler, Don Newkirk

This was a very busy committee this year. The committee screened and hired restoration contractors. They saw to it that routine maintenance was done, and annual checkups took place. Bill met regularly with representatives of the Highway Department regarding its responsibilities as we work with them to care for the building and grounds. He over saw the work of the contractors. Don made many significant improvements and did numerous repairs.

Facility: Storage and Organization Nancy Newkirk

The basement and Toll Gate building were both cleaned and reorganized. New shelving was installed, and other creative use of space has been utilized. All this provides much needed additional, appropriate storage. Storage for large bulky items continues to be inadequate. A solution for the overcrowded Carriage House is under consideration.

Facility: Landscaping Karen Beck, Eileen Wolck

The Town Highway Department, as always, assisted us by mulching the garden, mowing and plowing snow. We plant and care for the shrubs and flowers.

Communications:

Karen Beck, Jan Cornell, Jill Knapp, Susan Leath

Jan Cornell, Corresponding Secretary, composed and mailed all personal notes as well as handling the mailing of the newsletters and yearbook. Three newsletters (Fall, Spring and Summer) were published and mailed. (Special thanks to Chris Philipppo and Bill Ketzer for their contributions) The annual yearbook was sent out in early September. Monthly announcements via e-mail continued to be sent to members who provide their contact information. (Currently 173) Press releases pertaining to the lectures went out to local media outlets. Jill Knapp recently assumed responsibility for the website, which she has been enhancing and updating. Jessica McMullan became our liaison with the Town Library.

Finance Bill Seyler, Mary Ann Shubert

The committee monitored and recommended a few adjustments to the budget based on unexpected developments. Due to the abnormal past season, and the uncertainty of the future, the committee recommended using the same budget in 2020 – 21 as we used in 2019 – 20. Adjustments can be made if needed.

Fundraising Wendy Brandow, Linda Schacht

The annual Election Day Bake Sale was its usual success. Plans for another cookbook are on hold.

Hospitality Dawn Pratt, greeters and guides

The museum was open Sunday afternoons 2 – 4 from June 9 through October 13, when it needed to close due to scheduled work on the building. They also hosted a group following an outing at Henry Hudson Park led by Susan Leath on Jan. 10, 2020. The total number of visitors to the museum was 276. Dawn and volunteers also provided refreshments at each lecture in the Delmar Reformed Church.

Events Multiple

The Ice Cream Social took place on June 9. Attendance – 47. Neither *Beer and Pretzels* or the traditional *Silver Tea* were held because the asbestos work could not be done until November which in turn delayed the restoration until December. Just as we were preparing to reopen, the virus arrived necessitating the cancellation of the *Afternoon Tea*, which was a disappointment. Helen Warner and Mary Kelle, co-chairs, had it planned and ready to go.

Membership Sharon Sestak

Sharon kept the membership list up to date with accurate contact information. New members received a packet of information. She maintained all the information pertaining to members, which is reported in the yearbook.

Membership – as of May 1, 2020 - 186

Museum Collections Linda Schacht and Sue Gutman**Ephemera** Karen Beck

The Collection Committee (Karen Beck, Sue Gutman, Nancy Newkirk, Sharon Sestak, Linda Schacht, Helen Warner). met monthly from September to February. Forms to improve management and documentation of the accession process were adopted and the Collection Management Policy was updated. The discovery of asbestos put a stop to the inventory work and other activities related to collections stored in the basement for several months. The work goes on as it is possible to do so. A committee (Karen Beck, Mary Kelle, Vicki Folger) formed to restore and catch up on BHA scrap-books. Cassie Artale assisted with transcription of diaries and documentation of 19th c. correspondence.

Museum Exhibits multiple

We launched an ambitious effort to create a museum that includes a variety of attractive new exhibits. No longer needing to reserve space for audience presentations gives us opportunities to present the history of the town for visitors of all ages. Interested volunteers were encouraged to get involved.

Out and About Visits Vicki Folger

Again, Vicki planned and organized a varied program. In October we visited the Palatine House in Schoharie. December brought us to the Hart- Cluett Museum in Troy, and in February, we enjoyed a guided tour of the Erie Canal Exhibit at the NYS Museum. The April and June visits had to be cancelled. Total participants: 30

Programming Mary Kelle

For the first time the entire *Speaker Series* was planned to take place at the Delmar Reformed Church as neither the museum nor its parking lot are any longer able to accommodate the number of attendees. Nancy Newkirk began the practice of displaying items from our collections at each talk. This is a big undertaking which has been very popular. Also, for the first time, the schedule was split into two series: Fall: Thursdays at 2 PM; and Spring: Wednesdays at 7 PM. Both the March and April talks were cancelled due to the virus. The total attendance for the four talks that took place was 366.

Research Bill Ketzner and Chris Philippo

Bill Ketzner researched and wrote an in depth, moving piece reminding us that estate sales are not just about things but sometimes represent day to day histories of real families. Bill initiated a plan to conduct recorded oral histories with long-time residents. Covid- 19 ended that endeavor for the foreseeable future. Chris delved into women's suffrage, very early efforts by women in Bethlehem government, and the 1918 pandemic – All valuable, new information specific to our town of Bethlehem.

Young Historians Deborah Croscup and Linda Davies

Hands on lessons pertaining to local history took place at both the Glenmont and Elsmere Schools. Unfortunately, all other scheduled visits were cancelled when the schools closed in March. These teachers also planned a Pop-Up event at the museum in September. Total students who benefited - 126



***Live for Today
Dream for Tomorrow
Learn from Yesterday***

**Wat is er?**

BHA has lots of strange looking objects in our collection. What is this?
Answer on back page.

We thank all of you who have renewed your membership and participated in voting. The updated bylaws will be in the yearbook. We are pleased to welcome Vicki Folger as Vice President and Linda Davies to our Board of Trustees.

Bethlehem and the Influenza Pandemic

The newspapers of the time were full of "Local Brevities" chronicling the doings of families, friends and visitors. Here is a selection related to the pandemic.

TABERNACLE SOCIETY ABANDONS MEETING The meeting of the Tabernacle society of the Sacred Heart convent, which was to have taken place at the convent in Kenwood this afternoon, has been abandoned on account of the epidemic of influenza. The annual meeting of the alumnae of the convent, which was to have taken place October 19, has been postponed indefinitely for the same reason. *Albany Argus*. October 11, 1918

CLARKSVILLE Mr. and Mrs. Harry Leonard and children are all ill with influenza. Dr. Irving Van Woert Sr. of Delmar is attending them. *Altamont Enterprise*. October 18, 1918

SLINGERLANDS There are several cases of influenza in Slingerlands. The public school was closed last week on that account. *Albany Argus*. October 20, 1918

DELMAR Carlton and Phillip Bruce, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon G. Bruce, are ill with influenza. William Osterhout, of Albany, formerly of this village, is seriously ill with influenza and peritonitis. *Albany Argus*. October 20, 1918

LOCAL BREVITIES The regular meeting of Tasawentha chapter, D.A.R., which was scheduled for next Wednesday afternoon, has been postponed to the first Wednesday in November, on account of the influenza epidemic. *Altamont Enterprise*. October 25, 1918

DELMAR Edward Garrey, who has been quite ill with influenza, is improving. [...] The infant son of Mr. and Mrs. William O'Neil, of Glendale avenue, died early Sunday morning, a victim of Spanish influenza. Mrs. O'Neil is also very ill with influenza at this time. *Albany Argus*. October 27, 1918

DELMAR School has re-opened after being closed on account of the influenza epidemic. Services will be resumed in all of the churches, Sunday. *Altamont Enterprise*. November 1, 1918

NORTH CALLANAN'S Albertis Snyder, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Snyder, formerly of this place, died of influenza last Wednesday morning at the home of his aunt, Mrs. Helen J. Van Zandt, at Becker's Corners. He was 27 years of age. The funeral services were held at Mt. Pleasant cemetery, South Bethlehem, Thursday afternoon. Mr. Snyder

had been afflicted with asthma and rheumatism for several years. There are three more at the same home who are ill with influenza, but they are improving. *Altamont Enterprise*. November 8, 1918

JACOB J. WIELAND, WHO WILL BE BURIED TODAY.

Funeral of Glenmont Man Will Take Place Today.

The funeral of Jacob J. Wieland, who died at his home in Glenmont Friday, will take place this afternoon at 2:30 o'clock.

Death was due to influenza. Mr. Wieland was in business in Albany for thirty-five years. Besides his wife, Mr. Wieland is survived by his daughter, Miss Loretta Wieland, his mother, seven sisters and one brother, Frederick G. Wieland. *Knickerbocker Press*. December 22, 1918



UNION CHURCH DeWitt Van Derzee has been ill with influenza the past week and under the care of Dr. Van Woert of Delmar. He is improving. Aaron Carman is also on the sick list. Mrs. DeWitt Van Derzee and little son have left the Brady hospital and are passing the time with her brother and sister-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. William Zeh, at Albany. *Altamont Enterprise*. January 3, 1919

SOUTH BETHLEHEM Mrs. John Hendrickson is spending a time in Cohoes taking care of her sister-in-law, Mrs. Styles, who is ill with influenza. *Altamont Enterprise*. January 10, 1919

DELMAR Seven children of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Hazelton are confined to the house by influenza. *Altamont Enterprise*. February 7, 1919

CEDAR GROVE Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Van Alstyne are ill with influenza. Dr. Van Woert of Delmar attends them. They are being cared for by Mrs. Henry B. Van Alstyne. *Altamont Enterprise*. February 21, 1919

BETHLEHEMBETHLEHEM CENTER. — Mrs. Ida Creble and Harris R. Creble, who have been ill with influenza, are improving. *Altamont Enterprise*. March 7, 1919

School has re-opened after being closed on account of the influenza epidemic. Services will be resumed in all of the churches, Sunday.

EXHIBITS

While we await the re-opening of the museum, BHA volunteers have been busy creating new exhibits. Here are some sneak peeks.



The Bethlehem Public Library is creating a **Quarantine Memories Archive**. Please visit their website and share your experience. <http://www.bethlehempubliclibrary.org/quarantine-memories-archive/>

Slingerlands Artist

Edward Buyck

By Robert E. Mulligan, Jr.

This past spring, BHA member Bob Mulligan became fascinated with artist Edward Buyck and vowed to find out more. This article is a preliminary result.

Eduard Pierre August Vincent Buyck was born in Bruges, West Flanders, Belgium, on 17 January 1888. His father Rene Aime was a noted architect in Flanders, as was his father Pierre Francoise before him. His mother, Augusta van Gheluwe Buyck, was born in Kensington, England.

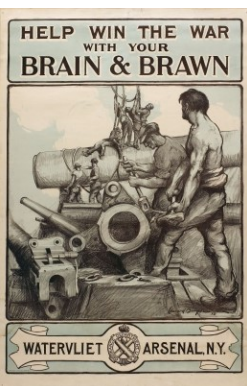
Edward had the advantages of wealth. He is said to have played polo, rowed crew for his school at the Henley Regatta, and competed in the Olympics as a swimmer. He studied art in Bruges, at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, and the Paris Academe de Beaux Arts.

As a young man of twenty-six, presumably his art studies were completed, and he was living with his family. In August the German Army invaded Belgium and rapidly overran the country, including Bruges. The Buyck family fled to safety to the mother's family in Great Britain, but Eduard remained to serve in the Belgian Army. Wounded early in the war, he went to Britain to convalesce with his family, and then decided to seek safety in the neutral United States.

Arriving in St Alban's, Vermont in 1915, via passage to Canada, Buyck had several letters of introduction to prominent Americans. For example, he was befriended by the Belgian born widow, Annette van der Wegen, widow of the noted surgeon Dr. Alexander Skene. He and another young American artist shared a studio in a former chapel on her estate in Fleischman's, NY in the Catskills. He later left for Albany, possibly because he had been invited to share a studio with the already noted Albany Artist, David C. Lithgow.



Edward Buyck working on his portrait of Col. Chas. E. Walsh
Courtesy of Bob Mulligan



Courtesy of Albany Institute of History and Art

By now the United States had entered the war in 1917. On June 5 of that year, Buyck, a 29-year-old alien, registered for the draft while living at 1 Clinton Square, Albany. He was inducted into the US Army on July 21, 1917, training at Camp Meade, Maryland. He was promoted Private 1st Class just two months later on September 20, and made Sergeant on October 1, 1918. This rapid promotion came apparently as a result of his work as a draftsman at the US Government Arsenal at Watervliet, NY. He was discharged on January 15, 1919.

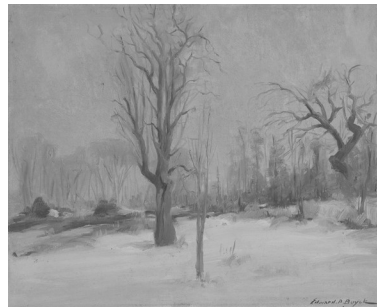
As well as producing technical blueprints, Buyck served as illustrator for the Arsenal's house magazine, including producing two posters in 1918, urging the workers to teamwork and greater effort, entitled *Brain and Brawn* and *Team Work*.

While at the Arsenal, Edward met Mary Willard Vine, a young woman modernizing the officer quarters there. She was an interior decorator and landscape architect. After a six months courtship the

couple married in Albany on 23 November, 1920.

In 1920-21, the Buycks took a brief detour in their careers, by managing the Black Mountain Fox Farm in very rural North River, Warren County. It does not require too much imagination to see why a former Belgian nobleman and a city bred young career woman would soon want to return to brighter lights.

The couple purchased a fifty-acre estate in Slingerlands, NY in 1922. This included a 125-year-old farm house at 400 McCormack Road where they would live for the rest of their marriage. Highfield Hall offered a many windowed studio for Buyck at the back of the old farmhouse. The surrounding acres offered country living. Interestingly, in the 1930 US census, Buyck as head of household, was described as a farmer, and his wife Mary the career woman, was dismissed with a simple H for housewife.



Winter Morning, Slingerlands, View from the Artist's Studio
Courtesy of the Smithsonian



Buyck with his portrait of his wife Mary Willard Vine
Courtesy of Bob Mulligan

Today this corner, where rural McCormack Road meets the busy New Scotland Turnpike, is opposite Holy Names Girl's School and across McCormack Road from the NYS Department of Corrections Academy. Until it was annexed by the City of Albany in 1967, this area was in Bethlehem.

Buyck was primarily an easel artist, whose commissions were most often portraits. His portrait of Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, is presently in the White House Collections. Other local notables include banker Peter D. Kiernan who he was painted at the oars of his racing scull. Two portraits were painted of Abram Brubacher, President of the NYS College for Teachers for a quarter century. Done at least a decade apart the two portraits are an identical pose, even to his necktie, seated at this desk, one painted in 1932 and the other a couple decades later.

Buyck's commissions also included three horse portraits. One of his letters of introduction when he arrived in America, was for William Woodward, a wealthy businessman who owned an estate on Long Island. Buyck had lived here for a time after his arrival. Later, in 1935, Buyck was asked to paint a portrait of Woodward's horse *Omaha*, the winner of the Triple Crown as a two-year-old in 1935. Buyck did a similar portrait of *Man of War*, perhaps America's most famous and beloved race horse. Twenty-five years later Buyck painted a second portrait of the horse in his well-earned retirement.



Man of War
Courtesy of Invaluable.com

This area's rich history also provided Buyck with commissions. For example, he painted two oils in 1929 for the 150th anniversary of the American Revolution. The first was *Clinton's Brigade at Canajoharie*. American troops draw their batteaux and

supplies across the divide between the Mohawk River and Lake Otsego. The second shows *Canajoharie in 1780*, a peaceful landscape.

Buyck also turned his hand to many other artistic tasks. He had been well and broadly trained in Europe.

In 1930, Buyck served on the State commission commemorating the carrying of the cable of the USS Frigate Superior from Big Sandy Creek, NY to the naval base at Sackett's Harbor, in 1814. This was no joking matter. The hempen cable was said to be six inches thick, 600 feet long, and weighed 5 tons. No cart was strong enough to carry it. Militiamen had to shoulder the burden for a day's march. Buyck designed the bronze plaques affixed to the granite stones and oversaw the erection of a series of roadside monuments.



Canajoharie About 1780
Courtesy of Arkell Museum

The Albany region had many educational facilities, banks, businesses, and printing companies. All needed an artist to design annual report covers, calendars, promotional booklets, and such. All were potential sources of commissions, although little of this too often anonymous ephemera has apparently survived. I suspect that the farm, and whatever wealth the couple had obtained from their families, was enough to sustain them throughout the Great Depression. Buyck was primarily a fine arts artist, and an old fashioned one at that, happiest at an easel.

The Argus Press, a long established and prominent Albany firm, printed and published Arthur Pound's book of poetry, *Mountain Meadows*. Buyck did the illustrations, and probably the design of the book as well. *Three Waters*, another local book of poems, was also credited to Buyck.

For the last six years of his life, Buyck was crippled by arthritis. He spent winters in South Carolina, for the warmth, but he could not paint. His self-portrait begun about 1955, is unfinished.

Buyck died at St. Peter's on June 8, 1960, and is buried in Albany Rural Cemetery, Section 113 plot 41. Interestingly, his place of residence on the death certificate, is given as Becker's Corners, in rural southern Bethlehem.

Mary Willard Vine Buyck married again on September 9, 1960 to Dr. E. Marin Freund. She donated much of the couple's papers and some art to the Smithsonian early in the 1970s. These relate principally to Buyck's art, but included her service as Art Project Supervisor of the Public Activities Section of the Division of Community Service for the New York State.

This was a federal program to put under-employed artists of all kinds, to work. During the late 1930s many of the post office murals, historic inventories, oral history projects, civic sculptures, and the design of many impressive school structures across the land were the result of New Deal, pump-priming efforts to keep the arts, and artists alive during the Great Depression. Mrs. Buyck administered these varied projects within New York State, during 1940-41, as the agency was caught in the turmoil of the beginning of World War II, and its closure in 1943.

In August of 1963, Mrs. Buyck commemorated the life of her first husband with a month-long exhibition of his works and mementos at the Albany City and County Savings Bank. She also opened her home, Highfield Hall for public viewing. Later she donated quite a few pieces of art and papers, including Buyck's scrapbooks, to the Albany Institute of History and Art.

Despite her own career, in the Times-Union article, Mrs. Buyck is quoted, saying she considered herself to be "a tail of his

kite. The caretaker of a great talent." She showed the reporter a scrap of paper, framed and on the wall of Buyck's studio. His note expressed his philosophy for life.

Art is teaching the world the meaning of life. The man who believes that money is the thing is cheating himself.

My favorite painting by Buyck is *The Cut*. I think it is most revealing of the man. Artists sometimes use a maul stick upon which to rest their wrist, as they do detailed brushwork. One end presses upon a steady surface. The free end is held in the artist's free hand, his brush hand supported on the stick. The upper end of the stick can be held in place by a string.

Here, the string has broken, the end of the stick has been forced into the canvas, by the pressure or weight of the hand holding the brush, ripping the almost completed painting. Buyck's efforts were ruined. But he chose to continue, whimsically painting himself in clown costume, a wry smile on his face. I find the painting very engaging and think I would have liked the man. Notice that Buyck was left-handed.



The Cut
Courtesy of Invaluable.com

A Note to the Reader

Research was done beginning in late May of 2020, and because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was done entirely by Internet search. I contacted several friends to ask for whatever information they might add about specific aspects of Buyck's life. Although cordial, they could not give new information. I thank them, and all who assisted me. Norman Rice, retired Director of the AIHA, remembered Mrs. Buyck/Freund with pleasure. But Buyck died before Rice came to the AIHA, and his widow was no longer active in the local arts scene, if she had ever been.

The Albany Institute of Art has in its collections several paintings and other works by Buyck, the gift of his widow. The AIHA Library has several scrapbooks, which must without doubt add enough new material to make this preliminary biography obsolescent. But my facts given here can be supported, and I hope this effort will be of assistance to some future biographer.

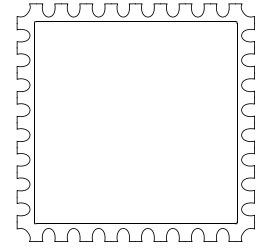


Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum

P.O. Box 263

Selkirk, NY 12158



Follow us on Facebook

The Bethlehem Historical Association

Cedar Hill Schoolhouse Museum
1003 River Road
P.O. Box 263
Selkirk, NY 12158
(518) 767-9432
bethhist1965@gmail.com
BethlehemHistorical.org

OFFICERS

President: Karen Beck
Vice President: Vicki Folger
Recording Secretary:
Nancy Newkirk
Corresponding Secretary:
Jan Cornell
Treasurer: Mary Ann Shubert

TRUSTEES

Debbie Croscup, Linda Davies, Vicki Folger
Carl Gutman, Chris Philippo, Dawn Pratt, Bill Seyler

Newsletter Editors
Karen Beck & Susan Leath



Wat is er?

It is a wooden stethoscope! It can be found on the shelf of our doctor's display.

The stethoscope was invented in France in 1816 by Rene Laennec. Laennec invented the stethoscope because he was not comfortable placing his ear directly onto a woman's chest to listen to her hear. He observed that a rolled piece of paper, placed between the patient's chest and his ear, could amplify heart sounds without requiring physical contact. *Wikipedia*