

## VAN HORNESVILLE COMMUNITY CORPORATION

# ARCHIVES REPORT

<https://www.vhccorp.org>

## 250 Years of Independence

1776-2026

As the country recognizes the 250<sup>th</sup> celebration of the creation of the United States of America, let us honor those local men and women who contributed to the war efforts during the American Revolution. Share the names and stories of the men and women to help us create a legacy book for future generations to remember these patriots' service and sacrifices.

For more information or to make a contribution, contact Michelle Hitchcock of the Van Hornesville Community Corporation at [archives@vhccorp.org](mailto:archives@vhccorp.org) or 315.858.9610 or Marcia Armstrong of the Henderson General Nicholas Herkimer DAR at 315.868.1988.

## HENRY ECKLER

AUGUST 11, 1739-MAY 2, 1820

Captain Henry Eckler was the second generation of Ecklers to live in the area. The first generation settled in the area and farmed near the Otsego Creek in the town of Warren, which is locally known as the Chyle. He attended school in Canajoharie. Henry married Christina and had between 13-15 children. He enlisted in the militia as a private and was appointed a captain during the American Revolution.

The information on Captain Henry Eckler was compiled from Bonnie Eckler's paper for the Yorker Club Convention in 1968. She referenced *The Eckler Family of the Mohawk Valley* by A. Ross Eckler, Jr. and *The History of Herkimer County*, edited by George A. Hardin. Bonnie Eckler Nestle is a ninth generation Eckler from the local area.

## Captain Henry Eckler AMERICAN REVOLUTION PATRIOT

Captain Henry Eckler served in the Revolutionary War entering as a private and being appointed as a captain on May 18, 1776 in the Tryon County Militia.

According to early stories, Eckler and Joseph Brant, a Mohawk Indian chief, attended school together and often wrestled with Eckler usually winning the matches. When the war began, Brant was a British ally, and he tried to recruit Eckler to no avail.

In the summer of 1776, General Herkimer and Brant held a peace conference in Unadilla, New York. Captain Eckler was ordered to kill Brant if any issues arose. Fortunately, the meeting was peaceful. Interestingly, some time after the conference, Eckler and Brant met near the Chyle. Brant's forces were headed to destroy Andrustown, but Brant warned Eckler to hide until they left.

The two men met again at the end of summer in 1781, when Brant and his forces attacked the Chyle settlement. Eckler was working in the fields when he saw his home on fire. He refused to surrender and managed to escape. However, Brant's forces captured Eckler's wife and children. His youngest was scalped, and the others were held captive for a few days but later released relatively unharmed.

Following the war, Captain Henry Eckler farmed on his family's homestead on the Chyle. After the Revolution, he was the assessor for the German Flats Township in 1787 and a road commissioner. He even taught school at the Chyle instructing in both English and German. Henry, and his wife Christina, are buried in the Squawk Cemetery in the Town of Stark in Herkimer County.

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# MRS. ADELINE WOODRUFF'S INFLUENCE

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## 1940 OTSQUAGAN

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The Journalism Department noted in the 1940 yearbook about their year. Under the tutelage of advisor and teacher Adeline Woodruff (Mrs. Robert Woodruff), they produced the VHS Highlights (weekly newsletter), the Otsquagan (yearbook), and the Variety. The journalism students participated in the National Scholastic, Columbia Scholastic National Duplicated and Quill and Scroll writing contests and attended the Syracuse Press Conference.

Mrs. Woodruff facilitated the writing of these publications for years, and her young journalists interviewed the townspeople who contributed information about the local mills, farms, and factories. Many interview summaries can be found housed in the Adeline Woodruff Collection at the VHCC Archives. Within the yearbooks, the local business history can also be explored through the advertisements in the annual publications.

The article, "Mrs. Robert Woodruff, Teacher in Van Hornesville, Dies of a Rare Throat Disease," noted that she started teaching in 1933 as a business and journalism teacher and married Robert Woodruff in June of 1935. After her sons (Alan, Neil, and Norman) were born, she remained as a teacher of journalism only. Adeline Urban Woodruff died at age 39 in February 1949 from myasthenia gravis.

If a job is worth doing,  
it surely is worth doing well.

ADELINE URBAN WOODRUFF

A person's legacy can be found in the stories shared by others. For Adeline Woodruff, the admiration for her as a teacher and person is evident throughout the 1950 yearbook. These students' appreciation for her guidance is poignantly shared in the dedication.

### DEDICATION

For the past fifteen years, the boys and girls of VHS have had the privilege of knowing the integrity, initiative, self-control, and the driving spirit of a woman of unsurpassed patience and fortitude.

Now that she has left us, we shall have the courage to go on because she left behind an un-dying [undying] will to succeed.

How many times we have thought that we couldn't do it, and succeeded in accomplishing a tough task only because of that guiding hand in the darkness and the drive of her encouragement.

Her accomplishments were never her own as far as she was concerned. She gave all of the glory to the students that she loved and lived for. She shared our tears and sorrows, as well as our joys and laurels. Her vision and foresight, her will-power and strength, will be a directive pointing way to us.

In the annals of the VHS HIGHLIGHTS, the name of Mrs. Adeline Wooruff will be cherished forever. There was never a truer friend, a better teacher, or a guiding light as she has been. She always gave and rarely received. Her motto, often repeated, was "If a Job is Worth Doing, It Surely Is Worth Doing Well."

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# WARTIME ON THE HOMEFRONT

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## 1943 OTSQUAGAN YEARBOOK

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The 1943 Otsquagan yearbook dedication was for the local men in service. It listed 129 names. Some of these names included members of the following families: Andrecheck, Barker, Barrett, Burke, Bush, Cook, Crandall, Czerniawski, DeLaney, Dingman, Douglas, Eckler, Gerhardt, Grescheck, Hoke, Ivan, Lampman, Loomis, McGuire, Miller, Misencik, Moore, Mumford, Ostrander, Ough, Pestar, Petrie, Richardson, Robertson, Rogers, Shoemaker, Shriner, Smith, Snyder, Soposki, Stallone, Stark, Streckler, Van Alstine, Yaworski, and Zysk.

The yearbook also acknowledged those serving on the home front. The students spent about 20 days helping harvest in Owen D. Young's apple orchards and at their own homes or helping other farmers. Inter-school athletics were canceled to save gas and tires, and students gathered at fewer bus stops to help shorten the bus route. The students also contributed money to purchase a service flag to honor the enlisted men.

To help boost the morale of the soldiers, the students printed an extra 120 copies of the VHS Highlights each week to send to the alumni in the service. Another example of the sacrifices made during wartime is noted in the "Diary of the Class of '43." In February, the diary reported "Rationing prohibits dances...We had tea dance two periods on Fridays."

### Dedicated to...

The boys of Van Hornesville Central School who are serving in the armed forces of the United States. On every battle front in the world.. V.H.S. boys are fighting for our country-in the army [Army], navy [Navy], air force [Air Force], marines [Marines] and coast-guard [Coast Guard].

The men who will be especially remembered are those wounded or killed in action.

There is no other sacrifice as great as the one these boys render when they leave their homes and educational opportunities, offering their lives to protect our freedom.

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## VAN HORNESVILLE JOURNALISM RECOGNITION

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Found in the Archives was a clipping entitled, "3 Area High School Newspapers Win Press Association Awards," which highlighted the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Central New York State School Press Association conference at Utica College. This event included over 270 high school journalists and advisors from 29 area schools.

Van Hornesville's own Alan Woodruff received first prize for sports writing for the Gain Press Honors, and the Van Hornesville Highlights took top honors with the Clinton and New Hartford papers with a ranking of All New York over the Superior and Class A ranks.

In the *Richfield Springs Mercury* on June 16, 1960, the Charles Calman family attended the journalism banquet held on June 9<sup>th</sup> at the Van Hornesville School. The school celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the VHS Highlights, the weekly newspaper for the school.

In the October 18, 1962 edition of the *Richfield Springs Mercury*, the VHS Highlights received second place for the Duplicated Newspaper Front Page and third place in the Duplicated Newspaper Editorial Page at the ESSPA Convention at Syracuse. A few of the attendees included Butch (Neil) Woodruff, Carol Peplinski, Barbara Smith, Diane King, and Louise Brodowski with advisor Gregory Gregor.

# RESEARCHING HISTORY

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## PATRIOT PROJECT RESEARCH

As we begin the process of compiling the information about local Patriots and military members who fought in the Revolutionary War, families can search their own family genealogy. The family Bible often has information. They can turn to NYS Historic Newspapers at <https://www.nyshistoricnewspapers.org> to see the newspaper publications from the days of old. The Town of Stark, Herkimer County, NY website at <https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/stark.html> includes information about various aspects of the Town of Stark. Books about Herkimer County and the Mohawk Valley will also provide historical information on these designated topics.

Join us on **March 25th from 1:00-4:00 p.m. at the VHCC Office** for research and conversations. If you have a Patriot Project contribution to share, bring it that day. For questions or contributions, you can also contact Michelle Hitchcock of the Van Hornesville Community Corporation at [archives@vhccorp.org](mailto:archives@vhccorp.org) or 315.858.9610 or Marcia Armstrong of the Henderson General Nicholas Herkimer DAR at 315.868.1988.

## FROM THE EDITOR

In this edition of the Archives Report, we look to the past to consider people whose contributions continue to impact our community. Consider the life of Captain Henry Eckler from the Revolutionary War period. His home on the Chyle Road led to many generations of Ecklers in the area from farmers to teachers and more. People often remember Robert B. Woodruff's many contributions to the local school; however, his first wife, Adeline, had a tremendous influence on the impact of writing and journalism at the school in the 1930s and beyond. Her journalism students started the Otsquagan, the school's yearbook. The history shared within the pages of these high school students' publications tells stories of the past from their own voices. Explore the local history of the Homefront during World War II from the 1943 Otsquagan. The VHS Highlights was celebrated in 1960 for its 25th anniversary. Adeline Woodruff's sons even continued the tradition by working on the school paper in their high school years. Truly, the contributions made by individuals in the present directly influence their own families and the community at large. Ultimately, through these day-to-day acts of service, individuals create lasting legacies for which we are grateful.

Michelle Hitchcock, Editor

## UPCOMING VHCC EVENTS

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January 31<sup>st</sup> - Line Dancing Class at the VH Fire Department Meeting Hall  
(Noon-12:45 for kids and 1:00-2:00 for adults. Cost: \$10.00)

February 7<sup>th</sup> - Valentine Making Party at the VH Fire Department Meeting Hall (1:00-4:00)

February 21<sup>st</sup> - Community Coffee at the United Methodist Church (9:00-11:00)

March 25<sup>th</sup> - Patriot Project Research at the VHCC Office and Archives (1:00-4:00)

Visit our website [www.vhccorp.org](http://www.vhccorp.org) for more information about these events and more.