

Relics & Recollections

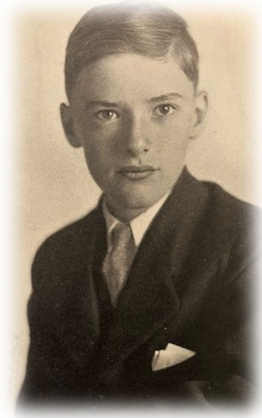
Tioga County Historical Society Newsletter

Summer/Fall 2025

Halsey's Story

by Linda Williams

The summer of 1927 was an amazing one in the history of our country. As related in "One Summer: America, 1927" by Bill Bryson, Charles Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, Al Jolson, Al Capone and Henry Ford all were in the headlines throughout that season.



The much more local news must have been just as exciting to the readers of Tioga County's newspapers that summer. Draper Park and Ahwaga Park had been created the previous year and their formal dedications, as well as the centennial celebration of the incorporation of the Village of Owego were all to be celebrated in August.

By all accounts, the celebrations were a success. While the Village could not draw newsmakers as famous as Lindbergh or Ruth, two nationally known figures did appear—John D. Rockefeller and Clarence Chamberlain. Major Chamberlain was the 2nd flyer to fly non-stop across the Atlantic. (June, 1927).

Finally, for one Owego teenager, 1927 was a *very* special year. Halsey Oakley Fuller was 13 years old and lived with his parents at 322 Front St. His suggestion of

Continued on Page 3

Walk Among the Dead Rise from the Ashes, Amidst Busy Fall Schedule

The lack of programs during the first quarter of the year due to our construction and changes has been replaced with an extremely busy schedule of programs over the next four months. We are proud to present **Shuttles and Spinners on Saturday, September 13** at 2:00 PM in the Main Gallery in the "Farm to Fabric" exhibit. The group is from Newark Valley and they will be demonstrating the spinning of flax and wool, as well as demonstrating using a loom.

A week later, on Saturday, September 20 at 3:00 PM (note later time), we will be presenting "Submitted For Your Approval—Back There." This will be a special airing of the 1961 Twilight Zone episode dealing the Lincoln Assassination. Gerry Smith will speak for a few minutes about Rod Serling who wrote this episode of his famous television series. Both programs are free and open to the public.



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Spring 2025

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From the Director



Well, it is true that at times it is everything all at once. I believed the first three months of the year were crazy — with carpet replacement, moving the resource center and putting up three exhibits — which they were.

The last four months of the year are turning out to be just as wild with activity.

The lack of programs from January – April has been matched with some incredible programs that have filled the calendar on the wall of my office from September through December. Take a look at our busy program schedule later in this issue.

Yours truly gets to portray Judge Charles Avery during our revival of the Walk Among the Dead on October 11. That is the same day that our exhibits will close, as we prepare for O' Tannenbaum which will open formally on November 11 and run through December 13.

Amidst all of this, I took an actual vacation (the first in several years) and left the area for a few days with my wife. I came back to a well-run museum with dedicated staff and volunteers ready to think about our exhibits that will open in 2026.

There will be much to tell about those activities in a short while. Needless to say, they will be timely — in more ways than one.

As this issue comes out, I am fast approaching my second anniversary as your Executive Director. I continue to learn what works, and what doesn't for this community. Perhaps an old dog can learn new tricks. At least I am trying.

Shortly, with two signed agreements, two parts of our collection will be moved to two locations at no cost to the museum. It will protect our archival books, and our newspaper collections from harm. This, while we still search for the funding to build the two two-story additions to the museum that will allow all of our collections to be above flood level.

Indeed, everything all at once!

“Ahwaga” as the name of one of the new Village parks to be dedicated that summer had already won him a \$5.00 prize.

Earlier in 1927, Halsey, who was a member of the Boy Scout troop sponsored by St. Paul’s Episcopal Church of Owego, was invited to travel with the Rev. Henry Whitehead, an Episcopalian clergyman, and a small group of boys to the US Virgin Islands. The trip would last several months, during which the boys would be tutored by Rev. Whitehead as well as traveling around the Islands. Halsey was to keep a journal of the trip, with the intent of publishing a travel book of his adventures with the guidance of Rev. Whitehead.

Rev. Whitehead was not an Owego native, but had worked with the Boy Scout organization in the past, and was an expert on the West Indies. He may have known Halsey from Boy Scout camp or from serving as a “supply” minister at St. Paul’s.

The proposed book already had a publisher—it would be part of a series from G.P. Putnam’s Sons called “Boys Books By Boys”. The premise of the series was to have a small group of teenagers travel with a noted explorer or guide to an exciting location for several months. One of the group would then write a book of their adventures. By the time of Halsey’s involvement, several books had been published, and had a wide audience.

It is unknown just how the publishers, Rev. Whitehead, and Halsey became connected, but all was settled by the late spring of 1927. Halsey’s parents, Lum and Mary Fuller agreed to the trip, and departure was scheduled for October.

Halsey finished the school year at OFA, and started Scout camp on June 30th. He was back in time to start the new school year as usual while planning and packing for the trip to come.

On October 19, 1927, Halsey traveled with his parents to New York City to meet up with Rev. Whitehead and the rest of the group. The sailing ship “Domenica” took the group to St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, landing on October 24, 1927, Halsey’s 14th birthday.

So began Halsey’s wonderful adventure, and the book that became “Halsey in the West Indies”, published in

1928 by G.P. Putman Sons as part of the “Books By Boys for Boys” series. A first edition of the book was donated to the Tioga County Historical Society in 1954.

The book is dedicated to “Padre”—Halsey’s name for Rev. Whitehead, and is illustrated with photographs as well line drawings by another one of the boys on the trip.

It is a lively and entertaining read, even after nearly 100 years. There are adventures in every chapter—and struggles with algebra. Halsey encounters Charles Lindbergh and voodoo practitioners. There are shark hunts and tarantula hunts. “Padre’s” contacts through the area made travel to several islands possible, and some of these trips were made even more exciting by treacherous weather.

Halsey was back in Owego at the end of May 1928, and sometime later that year the book was published. While the book was mentioned in the Owego papers, it is not known how his family or local citizens reacted. In October of 1929 the “Owego Times” republished a favorable review from “The Target”, a paper for boys printed in Ohio.

A search on Amazon.com today reveals that a facsimile reprint of Halsey’s book is available for purchase. While it is described as “...a must-read for anyone interested in the history, culture, and natural beauty of this fascinating region...” nowhere is it mentioned that the author was 14 years old!

Halsey continued on at OFA where he is listed in 1931 as a sophomore. Another student in the yearbook of 1931 was Olive Marie Tilly.

Sometime in the next year or so, Halsey left Owego to finish his high school career in 1933 at the Carson Long Institute; a long-standing military academy in



Bloomfield, PA. He also studied at Washington-Lee University in Lexington, KY.



Halsey had not forgotten Olive. In a 1999 memoir of Owego lawyer Timothy Oakley, Don Tilly remembered in 1934 how kind the old lawyer was to a "...10-year-old skinny little kid perhaps because his grandson [Halsey] was interested in my sister Olive."

In 1934 Halsey started working in Hamlin's Red Cross Pharmacy on Court St. in Binghamton, NY as a clerk while studying to be a pharmacist. Olive was employed as a stenographer at the same place of business.

These occupations were listed in a brief announcement in the "Owego Times" of February 19, 1935 of the young couple's engagement. At that time no wedding date



had been set.

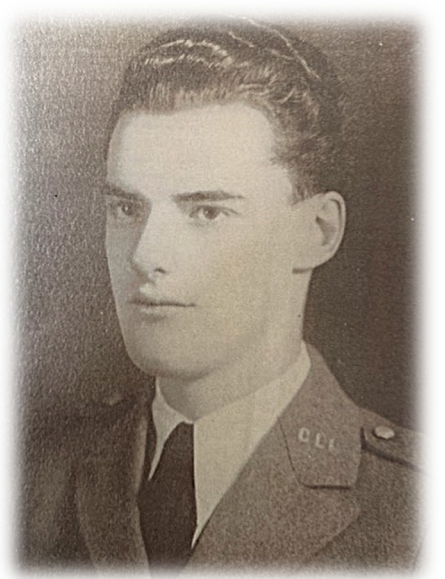
In a tragic turn of events, the next part of this couple's history is told only through obituaries.

On August 1, 1935 Halsey experienced severe back and neck pain, and within 2 days was admitted to Robert Packer Hospital in Sayre, PA. Diagnosed with infantile paralysis—the dreaded polio—his condition steadily worsened. Nevertheless, even with no hope of recovery, the couple was determined to marry.

Local officials went into action—Justice of the Peace George Bonfoey of Sayre arranged for the license. Charles Bassett and Thomas Tracy, friends of Halsey, rushed the license to the Towanda Courthouse to be

certified. The ceremony was performed bedside by Rev. Sidney Winter of St. Paul's Church in Owego, Halsey's former pastor and scoutmaster.

Two days later, on August 8, 21-year-old Halsey died. His funeral service was held at his family's Front St. home. Once again, Rev. Winter officiated. Halsey was buried in the Oakley family plot in Evergreen Cemetery, Owego.



Halsey's death left grieving parents, a grieving wife, and a stunned community. Polio was a dreaded disease, always feared, but especially so in the summer months. It is transmitted person-to-person, and the virus thrives in contaminated water.

There was not an epidemic locally at the time of Halsey's death. No other case was reported to the Tioga County Board of Health. In Broome County, where Halsey and Olive worked, the Binghamton Health Officer declared that the last [of 5] cases had been released from quarantine on August 28th, and that "... the danger is past." Were these cases related to Halsey's? The answer is unknown, but the timing is suggestive.

Olive Tilly Fuller went on to marry Naval Ensign John Lee of KY in St. Paul's Church on September 10, 1942. The couple eventually had two children and settled in Ohio after WWII. Olive died in FL in 2001, and is buried there.

Halsey's short life did not extend long enough to include the development of a preventative polio vaccine—that would have to wait until the 1950's and the generation of Olive's children.

It is best to remember Halsey Oakley Fuller not for the tragedy that ended his life, but for the marvelous trip of 1927, and the engaging story that became his lasting legacy to us.

October is even busier for the museum. Join Dr. Richard Quest as he delivers a riveting new presentation using recently uncovered Civil War family artifacts collected by Lt Benjamin W. Loring while serving in the US Navy onboard Iron Clads and Monitors. These incredible artifacts reveal some of the long- forgotten stories of the battles in the struggle for freedom and liberty that turned brother against brother. Join Dr. Quest on October 4 at 2pm at the Tioga County Historical Society for his presentation titled *In Small Things Remembered, A Civil War Story*.



On Sunday, October 5, 2025, the museum will once again participate in Porchfest. This is the fourth annual Porchfest, and the second year that the museum has been a site for the event that runs from 11:00 AM—4:00 PM. Check their listings of bands and sites to see who might be appearing on the steps of the museum, which will also be open to visitors on that day.



Then, on Saturday, October 11, the Tioga County Historical Society is proud to present “**Walk Among the Dead.**” We are happy to bring this tradition back to Owego, just like we have brought back several personalities from the grave to tell their stories and the story of Evergreen Cemetery.

There are three tours: 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM, and 2:00 PM. The tours are limited to 20 people per tours, and the cost is \$30.00 per person, or \$50.00 for a couple. In addition, participants will receive a free bottle of water, and have the opportunity to purchase Peter Gor-

don’s **An Evergreen Companion** for an additional \$10.00.

Imagine walking through a place steeped in history and heritage as those buried there tell their own stories of life and death in the community. The event will occur rain or shine (or snow), so dress according to the weather, and there is extensive walking up and down hills.



Parking is available at the chapel on East Avenue or at the top of the cemetery where the tour begins. Please follow the directional arrows on the billboards to help direct you.

To sign up for the tour, please call 607-687-2460 or contact us at museum@tiogahistory.org.



WALK AMONG THE DEAD



THEY COME BACK FROM THE GRAVE
TO TELL THEIR STORIES

EVERGREEN CEMETERY WALK OCTOBER 11, 2025

Tours at 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM, 2:00 PM

Cost \$30.00/person, \$50.00/couple.

Purchase a copy of ***An Evergreen Companion***
for an additional \$10.00

Call 607-687-2460 or museum@tiogahistory.org to register

TIOGA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PROGRAMS

September 13, 2025 **2:00 PM—Main Gallery** The Shuttle and Spinners group from Newark Valley will be providing a demonstration of spinning flax and wool, and giving a demonstration on a loom.

September 20, 2025 **3:00 PM—Main Gallery** “Submitted for Your Approval—Back There” An airing of Rod Serling’s episode of the Twilight Zone dealing with the Lincoln Assassination

October 4, 2025 **2:00 PM—Main Gallery** Join Dr. Richard Quest as he delivers a riveting new presentation using recently uncovered Civil War family artifacts collected by Lt Benjamin W. Loring while serving in the US Navy onboard Iron Clads and Monitors. These incredible artifacts reveal some of the long- forgotten stories of the battles in the struggle for freedom and liberty that turned brother against brother. Join Dr. Quest on October 4 at 2pm at the Tioga County Historical Society for his presentation titled In Small Things Remembered, A Civil War Story.

October 5, 2025 **Porch Fest—Times to be Announced**

October 11, 2025 **Walk Among the Dead: A Tour of Evergreen Cemetery**
Tours at 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM, and 2:00 PM with a cost of \$30.00/person, or \$50.00/couple. Each tour limited to 20 people. See newsletter for further information.

October 11, 2025 **Exhibits close**

November 7, 2025 **Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony opens O’ Tannenbaum Fund-raiser**

December 13, 2025 **O’ Tannenbaum Closes**

WELCOME NEW LIFETIME MEMBERS

We are proud to announce that we have added three new Lifetime memberships to our roster of nearly 400 members in the Tioga County Historical Society.

They are: John and Theresa Hamm of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
 Thomas McEnteer of Owego, New York
 Emma Sedore of Owego, New York

Lifetime memberships are \$1,000 each, and greatly benefit the museum, and daily operations. If you are not a member, we encourage to join using the membership form later in this newsletter issue.

Thank you to each of you for helping our mission to collect, preserve, and interpret the history of Tioga County.



O Tannenbaum

A Fundraiser for the
Tioga County Historical Society

November 7-December 13

Tuesday-Saturday 10am-4pm

Tioga County Historical Society

110 Front Street, Owego, NY 13827-1519 | 607.687.2460 | museum@tiogahistory.org | www.tiogahistory.org

Membership Form

Student	\$10	Corporate	\$200
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiver of On-site Research Center Usage Fees • Discounted Copying Fees • Invitation to Annual Meeting 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Individual Benefits • Recognition in Newsletter and Annual Report • Advertisement on Museum Webpage <i>and More...</i> 	
Individual	\$25	Supporter	\$250
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Student Benefits • Quarterly Newsletter • 10% Off Gift Shop Purchases • Invitation to Annual Members-Only Event 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Individual Benefits • Recognition in Museum Newsletters • \$25 Gift Certificate to Gift Shop 	
Family	\$50	Patron	\$500
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Individual Benefits • Behind-the-Scenes Tour • Invitation to all Children's Events 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Individual Benefits • Recognition in Newsletter and Annual Report • \$50 Gift Certificate to Gift Shop <i>and More...</i> 	
Donor/Small Business	\$100	Lifetime	\$1,000 and Over
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Individual Benefits • Recognition in Newsletter and on Website • Personal Invitations to Exhibit Openings 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the Individual Benefits • Featured on Museum Webpage • Recognition in Newsletter and Annual Report • Free Admission to Paid Events <i>and More...</i> 	

How Your Membership Supports Our Mission

We must raise **96%** of our operating expenses through donations, memberships, and fundraisers. Your generosity allows TCHS to provide exhibits, programming, research, and educational opportunities to the public and allows us to keep admission to our museum affordable.

We need your support to operate!



Detach form below and mail to: TCHS, 110 Front Street, Owego, NY 13827-1519

NAME (\$) _____ NEW MEMBERSHIP RENEWED MEMBERSHIP

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

I WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION* IN THE AMOUNT OF: \$ _____

MY EMPLOYER PARTICIPATES IN A MATCHING GIFTS PROGRAM (FORM ENCLOSED)

*Contributions you make in addition to your membership may be tax deductible.

MEMBERSHIP AMOUNT: \$ _____ TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

MASTERCARD

CARD NUMBER _____

VISA

EXPIRATION DATE _____ CVV # _____

DISCOVER

SIGNATURE _____

CASH CHECK # _____

Please make checks payable to "TCHS"

05/2020

Tioga County Historical Society
110 Front Street
Owego, NY 13827

