

THE TOWN OF MALTA

1802 - 2002

as told by Historian, Ruth Roerig



Ruth Roerig

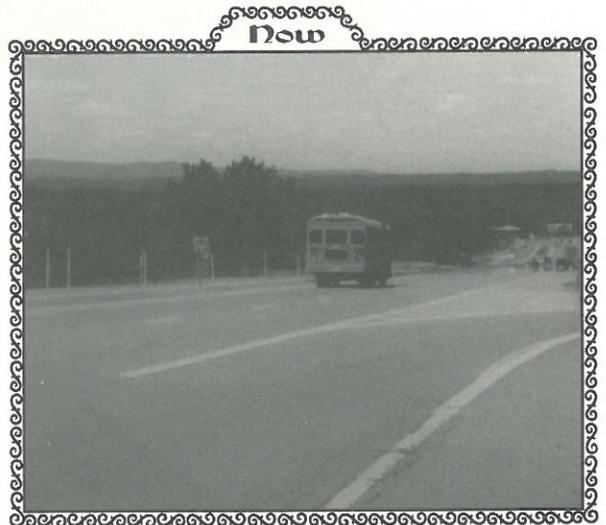
By 1762, steady progress was made by people traveling the waterway, the Hudson up to Stillwater (first known as Uptown, then Upton). Were they able to see in their mind's eye what the Town of Malta would be today? Would they understand what a wonderful way of life we descendants would inherit? Of course not! Many sturdy, hardworking New Englanders made their way west into the Colony of New York, looking for a better life inland, with homes, and a future for themselves and their children.

Two hundred and eleven years ago, on 7 February 1791, our mother-town, Stillwater, separated itself from Albany County, and became a part of the newly being formed Saratoga County. Albany County's border extended to the Canadian border, a huge wilderness. On 3 March 1802, by an Act of the Legislature of the State of New York, Malta separated from Stillwater, and took its first baby steps at self government as its own township.

One month later, the citizens of our new Town held their first Town meeting at the home of Michael Dunning, Sr. Our first election of officers was held, and Samuel Clark, a prominent and politically active man was elected as Supervisor. Elected also were three assessors, two overseers of the poor, two constables, three commissioners of highway and nine overseers of the highways, and other officers. The number of people elected to each office suggests to us how difficult the job of running the Town was.

The origin of the Town's name is uncertain, and will probably always remain so. The most plausible explanation is that it was derived from the Town's earliest hamlet known as Malt-ville (Maltaville). There was a malt brewery located in Malt-ville for the making of whiskey and beer, and "hops" were a crop grown in the area. Other people claimed that some early residents of the township were well-traveled and educated and wished to give their township a classic name to start it off properly. However, it would appear that time has decreed that the brewery theory has prevailed, and is probably the correct explanation.

The permanent settlements of Malta actually started during the last half of the eighteenth century. The people were well established by 1802 with farms, settled residences, a few roads, and some industry to meet people's needs. The township simply did not drop neatly, full grown into place. Years of hard work had preceded its independence, and its growing population made it legal and time for the area to stand on its own.



Route 9 presently



Stone Crushers building Route 9 - circa 1911

TOWN HISTORY (CONTINUED)

As explained before, Maltville in the southeast corner of the township, the closest to Stillwater, was the first settlement in Town commencing prior to the Revolutionary War. This section was part of the early land grant known as the "Saratoga Patent" surveyed in 1752, and made ready for the sale of its land. Twenty years later (1771) the Kayaderosseras Patent was surveyed, which included the balance of Malta's land, and this land, also, was ready for sale and development.

By 1762, John and Robert Hunter and Ashbel Andrews, Sr., all members of a church congregation of Canaan, CT moved en masse to Stillwater, and finally pushed westward to the east of Round Lake, near Maltville. These men were attracted by the rich soil of the area, and the water power available for the potential mills they so badly needed to develop. In its time Maltville had a tavern, hotel, carriage shop, stores, several mills, and the brewery, making it a very active place.

On May 10, 1791, Samuel Clark, our first Supervisor, offered his residence as the site of the first sessions of both the Court of Common Pleas and the Court of General Sessions in the newly formed County of Saratoga. Today an historic marker is on that location. Samuel Clark purchased a large tract of land on the Malta side of East Line Road where he established his farm and operated a grist mill. He was a distinguished gentleman and served with a career of public service. He was an assistant Justice, Judge of Court of Common Pleas, a presidential elector in 1792, voted for George Washington, he was County Treasurer, County Superintendent of Highways, member of the State Assembly, as well as Supervisor of Malta.

East Line is another of the earliest settlements in Malta. It sits on East Line Road and in its early years was a very industrious place. This community supported three churches, a school, a tavern operated by Mr. Marvin, a hotel, eventually a railroad station, a flax oil mill, two blacksmith shops and a grist mill. One of the earliest deeds, dated 7 April 1772, signed by Seth Hull, Nathaniel Grummond and William Marvin, all of Dutchess County, N.Y. purchased 600 acres of land along the south side of Route 67. This land cost these men 420 pounds, and the land extended from East Line to Route 9, Dunning Street. We know these men were here by the Revolution because they were all members of the local Militia, Regiment #13, Albany County.

In 1773 Michael Dunning, Sr. from Newton, Fairfield County, Connecticut secured a deed for a large piece of land in the center of Malta, on the north side of Route 67. He purchased the entire Lot #10, of the 5th Allotment Patent of Kayaderosseras (1127 acres). The land ran from the Ballston Line at East Line, east through Dunning Street to Plains Road. Captain Dunning, who was instrumental in the formation of the local militia, set aside three acres of this land to be used as a public square and parade ground, which was used by various communities during the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. "The Parade Ground" exists in part today at the intersection of Dunning St. and Route 9, as a focal point of the community and was designated as an historic district by the Town Board in 1990. The settlement which grew up about the four corners became known as "Dunning Street," and in time soon rivaled the earlier settlement of Maltville and East Line.

Another of our earliest communities is Malta Ridge. Dean Chase came as a young boy with his parents from Swansee, Massachusetts. For many years he operated a tavern at Malta Ridge. Not only was it a well-known tavern and a large stage coach stop, but was often used as a marking point on local deeds and other legal papers to pinpoint the area. It is very common in the oldest deeds to find the description of "On the road leading from the tavern of Dean Chase." Other early names of the community were Luther Landon, Ebenezer Millard, Obidiah Tompkins, John Rhoades, and Timothy Shipman. Many of these men came from Fairfield Ct.

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TOWN HISTORY (CONTINUED)

Among the earliest settlers were two gentlemen of the Loyalist persuasion. Their names were Daniel McAlpin and Peter Drummond, but the fortunes of war finally meant their permanent removal to Canada, and dealt harshly with their lives, and the lives of Daniel McAlpin's family. Daniel had served forty years as an officer in the British Army. He retired, came to America and decided to make his home in upper Malta, west of Saratoga Lake. He purchased 900 acres of land, and at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, had six hundred acres improved and also had twenty-three men working for him. He referred to his home as his plantation. Lt. Peter Drummond had served under Colonel McAlpin in the British Army, and came to live in the Malta area with the Colonel and family. It would appear that the crimes against America performed by these two men was to actively encourage men of the area to express their loyalty to the King and fight on the British side of the war.

Both men had their lands and possessions confiscated by the Americans, and were imprisoned in Albany Gaol for treason. Their families were imprisoned, torn apart, and separated from each other. Both McAlpin and Drummond fought with General Burgoyne in the Battle of Saratoga. Eventually, McAlpin worked his way to freedom through the wilderness to Canada, where he died five months later. Lt. Peter Drummond spent 15 months in Albany Gaol, finally signed his allegiance to the United States, was released, returned to this area and attempted to get back the property which had been confiscated. He was unsuccessful, and about 1780 returned to Canada where he remained the rest of his life. We assume today that Drummond Creek in the northwestern part of our township is named after Peter Drummond. The fate of Daniel McAlpin's wife, Mary and his two children is unknown.

This section of the history of Malta (McAlpin & Drummond) is new information to the citizens of Malta and is not generally known. These facts and the documentation were provided to your Historian's office very recently by Mr. Richard Dorrrough, a citizen of Malta who spent years researching the marvelous truth about our earliest history, its citizens and the Revolutionary War. The Bicentennial Committee would like to extend our personal thanks to Mr. Dorrrough for his providing these facts, including documentation.

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TOWN HISTORY (CONTINUED)



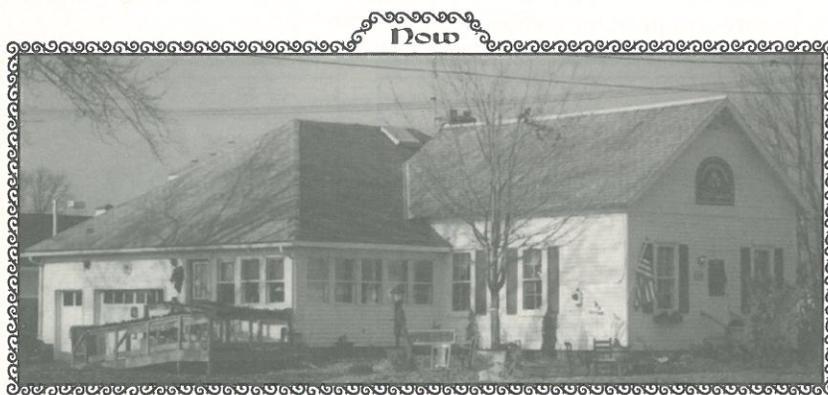
*Dunning St. Common School #3
circa 1900*

we have been told quickly depleted the soil. "Old Timers" have told us that much of the flax was taken to Ballston Spa to be used in the paper mills there in later years.

The Grange was an extremely important part of the life of the people. There were two granges in the township, one at Malta Ridge, Grange#1488, and the other at Maltaville, #1420. This organization played a strong role in the development of the good farm, and the education of the farmer and his family. The grange also served as a major influence on the social lives of the public. There were socials, public dinners, holiday celebrations, and who can forget the Saturday night dance.

Into the Twentieth Century, one could start to see the gradual decline in farming. The population grew, the amount of the land did not grow, and as the land depleted residents, primarily the youth, began to seek employment outside of the township. The development and rapid advances of the automobile, made great inroads into the agricultural way of life. By 1906 driving horse, autos or bicycles faster than six miles per hour was prohibited. By 1908 the speed limit was raised to ten miles per hour, and by 1920 had advanced to 15 mph.

To Malta, it's churches have always been vitally important. Today, we have nine churches within the Town of several denominations, with many more churches living near our borders. To early Malta the communities grew and developed literally around the church. In every community we can see the church as literally the center of the community. The church provided faith and hope, upheld our traditions and morals, provided education, a social life, and all that is important to hardworking, struggling, people. Often the church came into the settlement bringing the people with it looking for a place to enjoy the important aspects of its religion.



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TOWN HISTORY (CONTINUED)

The earliest recorded church in Malta was the Presbyterian Church of East Ballston, incorporated 1 March 1793. The Methodist Episcopal Church at East Line (Stillwater) was founded in 1804, with the first church actually built in 1809. The building still stands today. The Christian Church of Malta was founded in Malta circa 1857, using the Holy Bible as its only rule of faith and discipline. A beautiful Presbyterian/Congregationalist Church was built in Maltaville about 1820. By 1906 this church was demolished and the congregation moved to Dunning Street. The Methodist Episcopal Church in Malta Ridge was founded in the early 1800's and survived for some fifty years before its demise. This church has remained comparatively unknown, but performed its responsibilities well during its existence.

In the early years, eight common schools were created about the township, plus the ninth school, a high school at Round Lake. These institutions were supported and maintained by the citizens of Malta. By the late 1950's, these small common schools were closing, one by one, and the students were moved to the centralized school systems at Ballston Spa, Ballston Lake, and eventually the Shenendehowa Central School System.

The automobile brought a dramatic change to the life of Malta. By the early 1900's construction was started on U.S. Route 9, which when completed ran from New York City to the Canadian border, and beyond. The labor required to build this road was performed by men, horses, and simple non-motorized earth moving equipment. Construction of the road from Dunning Street to Kayaderosseras Creek required a hundred men and nearly as many horses, so tradition states.

Originally, Route 9 was a major Indian trail, and a central route to Canada. It was, of course, a dirt road, used by the stage coaches from Albany north. It originally traveled from town to town, north to Clifton Park, Dunning Street, Malta Ridge and then northward.

The automobile and the building of Route 9, opened up the north country to the population of the United States, to Saratoga Springs, the horse races, the Adirondack Mountains and to Canada, and it helped the economic development of Malta. The development of businesses springing up along the way on Route 9 and other highways were important. For example gas stations, restaurants, over night cabins, and later motels all directly affected the economy.

Interstate 87, the Adirondack Northway, was constructed in the early 1960's. It completely bisects the Town and provides three interchanges for easy access to resident commuters to Albany, Schenectady and surrounding areas wherever they work outside Malta. This highway also opened up the entire township to all kinds of enterprise.

The population continues to grow. Based on the last Census, Malta's population exceeds 13,000. In 1967 the Malta Town Board adopted a Zoning Ordinance, appointed a Planning Board, a Zoning Board of Appeals, an Enforcement Officer, and an Environmental Board.

As we celebrate our 200th year, Malta has become a thriving "Family Town" known as both the home of major employers such as State Farm and Stewart's, and the hometown of citizens enjoying its superior quality of life from Parks & Bikeways to a Downtown and a Community Center. It has become a wonderful place to live, work and play, known for its natural beauty and pleasant ambience.

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MALTA DISTRICT #8 SCHOOL HOUSE, 1941



Photo & article submitted by Anna Horstman (Solotruck)

The Malta District #8 school house is located at the intersection of Route 67 and East Line Road. It is sad to see that it is slowly deteriorating and that it will eventually be gone. It was a typical one-room school house with a hand pump for water and a wood furnace for heat. One amazing teacher, Miss Scidmore, taught all eight grades and all subjects, including the "Pledge of Allegiance". We also learned how to share, how to get along with one another and how to settle our differences. We even had a dog that came to school. His name was "Poochie" and he was loved by all. We all chipped in what coins we could to purchase his license and some food. He lived a good life.

The Christmas Program was the highlight of the year. All of our families were invited. Each child had a part, and at the end of the Program each child received an orange and a box of Christmas candy from Santa. Another exciting event was the end of the school year picnic. Each family brought a dish to share. After eating the delicious food, children played games and the adults visited. Needless to say, we all enjoyed ourselves and looked forward to summer vacation. Between 25 and 30 children were enrolled when I attended school here in the 1930's.

School Days *by Ruth Roerig*

Even as a little girl living on the Ballston side of East Line Road I was interested in history. I enjoyed listening to my father, Elmer F. Weed, who was born in 1896, talk with his buddies about their "East Line School days." The School actually served two Towns inside one building, Ballston Spa and Malta. In my father's day, a teenage boy's top priority was to work on their family's farm, schooling was secondary. It was common for a young man of 18, 19 or 20 to still be in school because of missed time.

East Line had a reputation for being a tough "neighborhood". The Weed, Hennessy, Murphy, O'Neil, Raymond, Denton, Vedder, Relyea and Gowers all farmed and had strapping big boys. One day this group of roughnecks decided they were sick of school and would rather be fishing, so they tied the teacher to a tree in the school yard and off they went.

Another time, around Halloween, the "East Line Boys" took a block & tackle and hauled Bessy the cow up on top of a farmer's roof. As you might have guessed, the farmer didn't hesitate to load up his shotgun and fire away at the boys as they bellied through the corn field. When I attended high school and said I was from East Line, eyebrows would furrow, inevitably followed by a lecture on being socially unacceptable. Such were the old days on East Line!