



represent huckleberries. White porcelain knobs held berry baskets which, when full, were dumped into the box via a square hole in the blue top.

Experts have commented that the box couldn't possibly have been used while picking, because it was too heavy and too cumbersome. It was more likely used to carry the berries from the picking area to the buyer. A smaller, plainer box, also in the museum collection (*the smaller green box, on the right in the photo*), is a more appropriate size to have been used while picking, but less is known about it.

Pat Clinton, the author of an "Underground Museum" article for the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum* in 1973 about Fahy's gift, went on to interview Mr. Fahy and record his memories. The Museum has a transcript of the two tapes.

William Fahy began picking berries at the age of eight. He recalled that "people would talk all winter about what they would do when huckleberry time came around." Many winter debts were paid off with berry proceeds. "Families of four or five kids would pick, and turn over all their money to their parents toward buying a house," Mr. Fahy said. "You could buy a nice home for around \$500 or

\$1,000 at the turn of the century."

"Little Willie" Fahy picked eight quarts his first official day as a picker. He said he picked into baskets or pails and then poured them into the box. A basket held two or three quarts; the box held 36 to 38 quarts. The first berries picked early in the morning would be wet with dew, so they would be poured on a clean cloth to dry before dumping them into the box.

The Fahy family sold berries to "old Tom" Yarrow, who had a cider mill at the base of the mountain where **Canal & Center Streets** meet. Yarrow, who also distilled wintergreen oil, stored huckleberries in his mill until he sent them by train to New York City.

In those days, berries sold for as much as 10 cents a quart at the start of the season, dropping to as little as a nickel a quart in the height of the season. Buyers would use six-quart measures when purchasing berries from pickers.

In 1879, special huckleberry cars were used by the *O&W Railway* to transport the blue fruit to the New York markets. Pickers at that time earned 6-8 cents per quart.

To put that number in perspective, blueberries from New Jersey, priced to move, cost a consumer 99 cents a pint, or more, in 2004.

As you visit the *Ellenville-Wawarsing Chamber of Commerce's Annual Blueberry Festival* on **August 28th**, take a moment to think about the memories shared in this column. Thanks to Terry Canceleno for taking time from her business to chat about her memories, to Mr. Fahy for his wonderful gift to the local history collection, and to Pat Clinton, now a Florida resident, who wrote publicity for the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum* while on staff in the Museum. Her "Underground Museum" articles record the history of many items in the collection and add to the accumulated treasure of local historical knowledge. ❖



Paul Lonstein, DMD, PC
Dentistry for the Entire Family
 42 Canal Street
 Ellenville, New York 12428
 845-647-2222
www.drLonstein.com
Call for Appointment
Welcoming new Patients

**Ellenville/Wawarsing
 Alumni Association**

P.O. Box 731, Napanoch, NY 12458
Website: www.virtuallife.com/ewaa
E-Mail: rcraft@hvc.rr.com

YOU GET IN TOUCH SO WE CAN STAY IN TOUCH!
Dues \$5 per year

COUNTRY FLOWERS

PERENNIALS
 99¢ over 100 varieties
HERBS 99¢ over 100 varieties
ANNUALS 99¢ a pack
 48 plants to a flat \$11.88
10" HANGING BASKETS \$7.99 or
4 for \$25.00
and soooo much more!

Call for Hours – 845-647-5256

Rt. 209 & River Street
P.O. Box 10, Napanoch, NY

Orders@dollarplants.com
www.dollarplants.com

