



Township of Sheldon Historical Society & Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter

Volume 4 Issue 1

Feb. 2015

*"An update on our progress as a Society and a Chartered Museum &
"A new look at old news from our town."*

Sheldon Historical Society Officers

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10/2014 - 10/2015

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*We will be open on Tuesday afternoons from June through Sept., 1:00 - 4:00, or by appointment, or just by chance when we are at the museum. Watch for the **OPEN** sign on the porch railing.*

Newsletter compiled by Jeanne Mest and Mary Ann Metzger (With the help of many volunteer hands).

We appreciate your feedback, and submissions.

Attention:

Meetings are held at 7:00pm at the Schoolhouse, on the third Thursday of the month, Feb. through Oct. Our next meetings will be on Feb. 19, March 19, April 16, and May 21, 2015. Non-members are also welcome to attend. Please come and bring a friend.

From your archival curator:

Welcome to the latest newsletter of the Sheldon Historical Society. It has been a long, cold winter for most of us, so it is exciting to look forward to resuming our meetings and making plans for the New Year. We have a great group of people who love history, and we have a lot of fun, so we hope you can join us sometime. We will be planning something special for the town-wide yard sale in June, and also some events to be held at our schoolhouse during the year, such as workshops or special speakers. We would appreciate your input, as we are looking for new ideas.

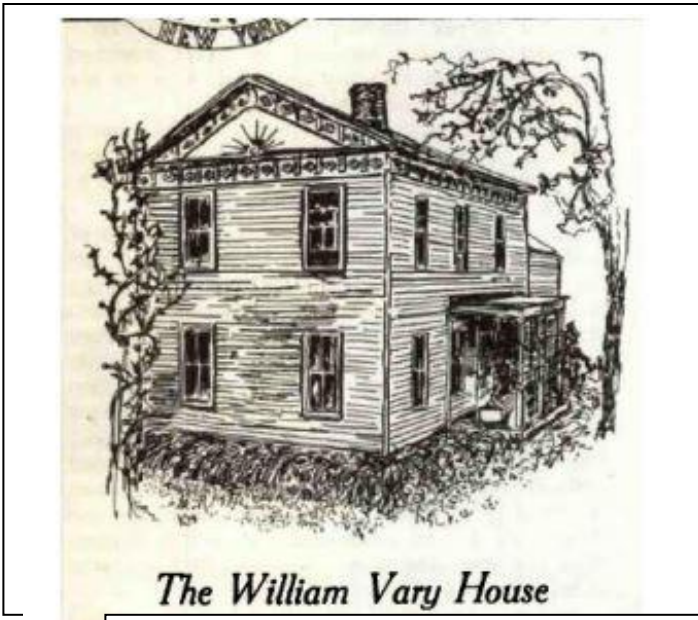
One of our projects last year was the restoration of a historic sign at Turner's Corners. Many of these historic signs were placed years ago by the State, but now their maintenance & replacement seems to fall on local groups. For a while, we thought the sign at Stony Brook Glen in Varysburg was missing, but it was being replaced by the Mary Jemison Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. They did a great of refurbishing that sign so the spot will always be remembered as the refuge of Mary Jemison and the Seneca Tribe during General Sullivan's Raid in 1779.

There is a very old & interesting sign that you can now see on display in our museum. It came from the historic Vary House; (picture left) built in Varysburg in 1815 by Col. William Thomas Vary, a veteran of the War of 1812. This house was known throughout the years as the house of the "Rising Sun" because of the unique sunburst sign in its peak. It was the home of many prominent Varysburg pioneers. That design became the Sheldon Town emblem. We hope to be able to continue with the newsletter. Please let us know if there is some historical topic you would like us to research or write about. If you would like to contribute an article, it would be very welcome.

Thank you, Jeanne Mest

Articles that are submitted may be subject to editing, at our discretion.

Town of Sheldon Historian- Barb Durfee. Phone: 585-535-7322
Email: SheldonHistorian@aol.com



The William Vary House

"House of the Rising Sun"

A closer look at the Sheldon Town Emblem →



"Low Bridge...Everybody Down" **"A History of the Erie and Genesee Valley Canals"**

Last October the Wyoming Co. Federation of Historical Societies held their annual dinner at Anastassia Events in Portageville. Night was falling as we approached a church and saw the light coming through the beautiful stained glass windows; we didn't know what to expect. After a delicious dinner, the owner gave us a short history. The Assumption Church was built in 1838 by Irish immigrants, and was the first Catholic Church in Wyoming County. There are 32 stained glass windows, imported from Austria in the early 1800s. After serving many generations in its 160 year history, the church was closed. The building was purchased by a former parishioner who has restored it to become a unique event center. They kept as much of the old church as possible, only changing the inside to accommodate tables & chairs instead of pews. The rectory adjoining the church was also converted to become the "Heaven Sent Bed & Breakfast". It really makes a lovely place to stay or have an event, very close to the entrance of Letchworth State Park.

Next was our speaker for the evening, Craig Braack, Alleghany County Historian, who presented a program called "Low Bridge...Everybody Down", about the Erie and the Genesee Valley Canals. He began with a quote attributed to Horace Greeley in 1865 that was coined many years earlier. "Go west young man, go west, and grow up with the country." The country was obsessed with going west, but it was all wilderness in the early 1800s. Travel by water was the safe, economical & fast way to go. Explorers had long searched for a waterway to the west, but the Appalachian Mountains made it difficult to find a way through. New York is the only state that borders on both the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean, but a route was badly needed to connect Lake Erie to the Hudson River.

At first the idea of a canal system was ridiculed, but in 1817, construction of the Erie Canal began. When it was completed in 1825, the canal covered 363 miles. The Erie Canal immediately revolutionized trade & transportation. The uncomfortable two-week wagon or stagecoach trip from Albany to Buffalo became possible in only five days. Freight costs were much less. Many of our Sheldon ancestors would have come from Europe through the port of NY, up the Hudson River & arrived here via the Erie Canal. WNY farmers, loggers, miners & manufacturers found their goods could reach farther than ever before. Shipping & trade, and society in general flourished. In 1825 the City of Buffalo had a population of 200, and grew to 10,000 people by 1830. Later on, the canal system provided a critical supply line which helped the North win the Civil War.

Today almost every major city in New York falls along the trade route established by the Erie Canal, from NYC to Albany, through Schenectady, Utica and Syracuse, to Rochester & Buffalo. Nearly 80% of the population of upstate New York lives within 25 miles of the Erie Canal.

The Erie Canal carried more than cargo. It was the Internet of its day! It became an "information superhighway" for new ideas. Social reforms like abolitionism, women's rights, utopianism, and various religious movements thrived. Over time it became necessary to add some "feeder" canals to the system, and the Genesee Valley Canal was begun in 1837. It stretched from the Erie Canal in Rochester to the Alleghany

River at Olean. The Genesee Valley was considered "the bread basket of the nation".

According to author Arch Merrill, it took 16 years to dig the 118 miles of the canal. *"They blasted out its path with hand drills and black powder. Horses hauled the scrapers and sometimes the workmen had to carry away the broken rocks in their leather aprons. Through the rocky hills around Nunda, they dug 'The Deep Cut' and the walls and rocks were laid hand by hand, stone by stone. They pinned the canal to the sides of the foaming falls of Portage, an engineering triumph. Through the hills of Alleghany County crawled the canal boats to the ports of Fillmore. Houghton, now a college town; Canadea, the site of the southernmost village of the Seneca's; Oramel, Belfast, Cuba, where at the Oil Spring in 1627 white man found the first petroleum in America; to Olean Basin and the Alleghany."* Richard Palmer wrote the following in his book, *remembering the Genesee Valley Canal*: "According to records & folklore, the boatmen were a rough & ready lot. The boats which plied the Genesee River Canal were well built, clean & painted. They were round at the bow and square at the stern, about 80 feet long & 14 feet wide, with a cabin at the rear for living quarters and one at the other end for the crew & horses. The boats could carry up to 90 tons of goods. As the railroads grew, they slowly put the canals out of business. The Genesee Valley Canal was closed in 1878. In 2000, the US Congress designated the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, to recognize this as the most successful & influential human-built waterway & one of the most important works of civil engineering in North America.

Contributed by Jeanne Mest

Sources:

<http://www.nps.gov/erie/index.htm>

<http://www.crookedlakereview.com>

"Canal Water & Whiskey", by Marvin A. Rapp

"The History of Wyoming Co. 1841-1880" by F.W.Beers

Both books & many others on local history are available in our museum library or at: <https://archive.org> or

<https://books.google.com>

Visit our collection, many you can take home and read, including some "Western New York Heritage Magazines."




Does your home have a story to tell? It just might. The following was shared with us by Barbara Durfee, Sheldon Town Historian:

The History of My House

When you start looking for a house to buy, to live in & raise a family, you usually look for the right size & the most affordable. There's a lot to think about, and you don't often take into consideration who built it. You don't go to the courthouse to see who lived there and why, unless you are into the historical aspect, looking to buy a home listed on the National Register of Historic Homes. When we purchased our home, all the right things were in place, but eventually we fell into the disruption of home repair. Our septic system had to be replaced, so all the bushes I had planted were dug up by the jaws of a backhoe. In the process, a very old foundation was located, which seemed to have been the size of another whole house. Then a neighbor told me the old part of the house was knocked down after the old grandma who lived there had passed away. "Really? Tell me more!" That was when I learned the Madden family had lived there and the grandma lived in that other part. Now things came together for me a little bit better. When you walked from the downstairs bedroom, through a small room with a window you could either go down cellar or to a closet that took up the rest of the wall. From the outside of the house, the foundation looked different, like it had been replaced in that spot, and in the basement you can see where there used to be stairs which had been replaced by new wooden ones. Now my interest took me to the court house and the county historian's office to snoop. Mr. Wilson told me the area on Rte. 98 was old and our house would have been built in the 1860-1880 era. When I mentioned the Maddens, he found that they had lived in a few places before ours. But naturally a lot of the records had disappeared.

We would love to hear the story of your home!
More about Rev. Daniel Jackson:

Free Baptist Cyclopaedia
Published: Burgess & Ward 1889
Page: 304



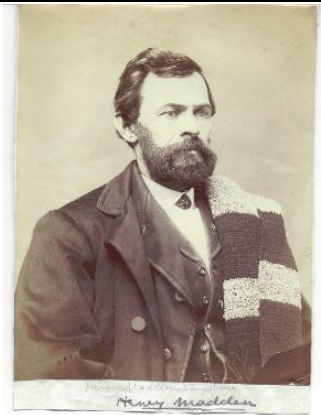
Rev. Daniel Jackson
Courtesy of Barb Durfee

OLD NORTHWEST FREEWILL BAPTIST RESEARCH - Gregory K. McCarty

—The Rev. Daniel Jackson of Varysburg, died Tuesday night. He was 83 years of age and the oldest minister of the Free Baptist denomination.

From Wy. Co. Times 1890

Since then I have found so much more. A man from the Midwest contacted me, wanting information about the Freewill Baptist church here in Varysburg, asking if I knew the Rev. Daniel Jackson was a minister here. I said I did and that I had read in the history of the Baptist church that the house I live in was built by him as his residence. That was almost unheard of in 1871, because the ministers always



lived in the home provided by the church. He sent me a picture of the minister that built this house, and I have it framed on a shelf that receives the first morning light. Rev. Jackson most certainly preached with fire and brimstone and his eyes show it. Then when I researched the Madden family, I learned they came here to start a mill and make shoe pegs. There were plenty of trees and they made and sold the little pegs to cobble shoes of many early settlers. Edward and Henry Madden (picture above) and their sister lived in the area. When Edward married, Henry, the sister and their widowed mother lived in this house. After the grandmother died, the old part where she lived was torn down from many years of disrepair. Henry died in the upstairs bedroom. The sister moved and the house was sold yet another two times before we were lucky enough to buy it. Last year, I asked online if anyone had any info on Henry Madden and the family, and I was sent a copy of his picture as well. He also sits in a frame next to the Rev. Jackson's picture. I don't think I shall ask for any more pictures of house residents. Submitted by Barbara Hoffman Durfee

Below: From WNY abt. 1882

—The report of the Supervisors, through, Dr. Peck, the chairman of the Board, in relation to our County Poor House and Insane Asylum, shows the condition of affairs at that institution. As one who has often visited the county house both officially and informally, we can endorse all that is said in this report, and would say that reports of unfeeling treatment of the paupers and insane are untrue and uncalled for. In case of sickness the unfortunate people are tenderly cared for, and in case of burial on the premises religious services are held. The Rev. Mr. Jackson, of Varysburg, is frequently called upon to conduct religious services at the county house, and Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Fields frequently read sermons and other religious matter on the Sabbath to those of the inmates who are in condition to appreciate such service.

Winter, winter and more winter!!!!



Braving the 2014 November storm with the 2002 Peterbuilt



John Hermann in the New Year (with new Town Truck)

The Sheldon Highway Department deserves a big hand for keeping our roads plowed and safe; for going out in the midst of the worst conditions which can be a danger even to them. (Especially in this seasons cold winter blasts). The new plow truck is a 2015 Western Star – the cost \$223,292.00. This truck replaced a 2002 Peterbilt. The dept. currently has 4 plow trucks: a 2006 Peterbilt, 2009 Peterbilt, 2012 Peterbilt and the new 2015 Western Star, pictured above. They also have a little International 5 ton truck as back up.

VARYSBURG

Personal Mention

Mrs. Ida Norton of Warsaw was a guest Sunday of Mrs. R. B. Horton.

Mrs. Gus Wolf spent the past week with friends in Auburn.

Mr. and Mrs. Merle Clor were guests Sunday of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Gay of Dale.

Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Laird and family and Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Nutting of Johnsonburg were the guests on Sunday of Mr. and Mrs. Porter Rood of Batavia.

Messrs. L. E. Cornish, Harry Fargo, Henry Kelter, C. W. Clor and H. C. Lewis attended a meeting of Olive Branch lodge, F. & A. M., at Le Roy on Saturday evening. The occasion was the rededication of Olive Branch Temple. M. W. Jacob C. Klinck, Grand Master of Masons in the state of New York, was the principal speaker.

Miss Mary McQuilkin of Warsaw was a week end guest of her brother, Dr. G. A. McQuilkin, and family.

Frank Romasser and daughter, Mary of Canandaigua and Miss Mary Rita Romasser of Kenmore were week end guests of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Romasser. Mr. and Mrs. Romasser with their guests

attended the 40th wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob George of Sheldon, Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Laird and family were guests Sunday evening of Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Laird.

LaVerne Newell is assisting his uncle, Charles Newel, of Attica with his farm work. He spent Sunday with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Newell.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bryson of Buffalo, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Auld of Kenmore and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Ostertag of Attica were dinner guests of their mother, Mrs. Lora Bryson, Monday in honor of her 80th birthday anniversary. Mrs. Bryson received about 40 cards and greetings from her many friends.

E. M. Bauer is moving some buildings in Batavia.

Harry Lewis of Nunda and Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Riber and son, Paul were dinner guests Sunday at the home of Mrs. Nettie Lewis. Mr. Lewis presented the family with a very fine venison roast which was enjoyed Monday evening at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Riber.

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Wolf, Sr., will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary Wednesday in the Grange Hall in Varysburg.

Our hunters have returned from the Adirondack mountains bringing with them six nice deer.

Mr. and Mrs. George Almeter, Mr. and Mrs. Henry, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stamper, Mrs. Florence Dellinger attended the Farm and Home Bureau meeting at Warsaw November 17th.

Mrs. Joseph Conrad and daughter Isabelle of Sheldon and daughter Laura and friend of East Aurora attended St. Mary's church, Sunday.

The next Home Bureau lesson on Nutrition will be given on November 1st.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Keen are installing a nice new bath room in their home.

Norman Hyman writes home here to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Cooney Hyman that everything is rosey in Texas and the sun is

shining hot on all sides of the oil well which he is working on don't that sound good.

Nov. 25, 1937 Wy. Co. Times

Nov. 25, 1937 Wy. Co. Times

Wyoming County

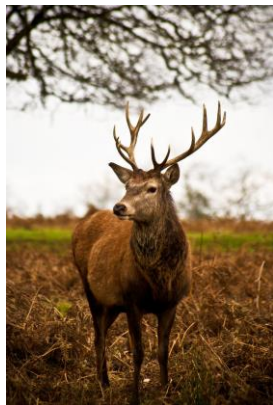
The returns on all kinds of game reported on licenses issued in Wyoming county follow. The fact that the license was issued in Wyoming county does not necessarily indicate that the game was taken in this county:

Cottontail rabbits 7742, a decrease of 4619; muskrats 2808, a decrease of 1501; skunks 2329, a decrease of 369; ducks 191, a decrease of 26; grey squirrels, 2631, a decrease of 925; grouse or partridge 402, a decrease of 284; pheasants, 2437, an increase of 312; snowshoe rabbits 143, an increase of 56; woodcock, 31, a decrease of 46; raccoons 583, an increase of 76; jack raccoons 71, a decrease of 57; red foxes 77, an increase of 4; fox squirrels 38, a decrease of 53; black squirrels, 105, a decrease of 86; wilson or jacksnipe 1, a decrease of 25; mink, 148, a decrease of 183; deer 16, coots 0, a decrease of 6; grey foxes, 11, an increase of 11; geese 6, an increase of 6; gallinules 0, a decrease of 2; opossum 10, an increase of 7; sable or marten 35, an increase of 35; fisher 0, a decrease of 3; bears 0, a decrease of 1.

Jan. 26, 1927 Wyoming Co. Times

The Wednesday-night church service coincided with the last day of hunting season. Our pastor asked who had bagged a deer. No one raised a hand. Puzzled, the pastor said, "I don't get it. Last Sunday many of you said you were missing because of hunting season. I had the whole congregation pray for your deer."

One hunter groaned, "Well, it worked. They're all safe."



Have you ever tried hunting and eating woodchuck? They're among the cleanest animals, because they only eat grass, clover and alfalfa. You must remove the little dark gland behind each of the front legs—if it is left there the meat will have poor flavor

Woodchuck Pot Roast

1 woodchuck
2 slices bacon
Potatoes, carrots, onions
2 onions or 1 onion and 1 apple
Salt and pepper to taste
4 c. water

"My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks."

— Henry David Thoreau

Soak woodchuck in salt water for 24 hours before cooking. Rinse well and place in roaster. Put onion and apple in cavity. Lay bacon over breast. Salt and pepper to taste. Place vegetables around woodchuck. Add water. Place in 350 degree oven and roast for 3 to 4 hours.

From mid-1800's Sheldon Town board meeting minutes:

Proceedings of the **Annual Town Meeting** held at the Schoolhouse near the Centre of the town of Sheldon on Tues.,

March 1, 1836:

Bounty of \$10.00 paid for every grown wolf and \$5 for every whelp caught & killed in the Town of Sheldon the present year.

March 6, 1838

No Buck shall be permitted to run at large between the 1st. of Sept. & the 1st. of Nov.

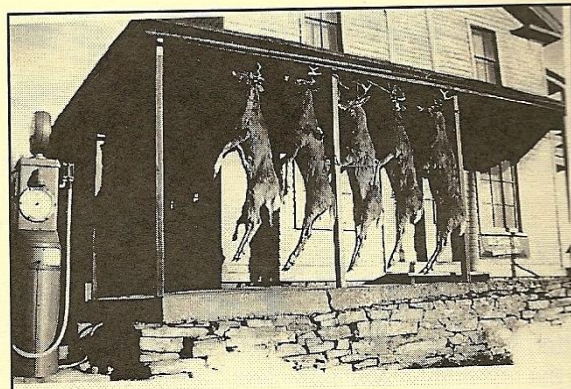
Voted that the Town of Sheldon pay .25 for each crow killed by any inhabitant of the town.

Voted that the Town shall pay .50 for each full grown fox & .25 for each young fox killed by any inhabitant of the Town.

March 5, 1839:

Voted to rescind the vote of last year for raising a bounty on foxes & crows.

The liver of a young deer tastes very much like veal. You can cut it in thin slices and then fry or boil it as you prefer.



Successful hunting trip from townspeople warrants a display at George & Kreutter's General store in Strykersville, N.Y. Black bear hanging on the left.

Excerpts about Wolves from "Beers History of Wyoming Co." 1841-1880

How lucky we are in Sheldon not to hear the howls of the wolves, and the danger they posed: a threat our earlier settlers endured.



It may be presumed that the howling's from the forest were at first alarming to the women and children. Yet after becoming acquainted with them, it was amusing rather than otherwise, while sitting around a blazing wood fire of an evening in a log cabin, to hear the howl of a pack of wolves in as many tones as there were individuals among them, and these answered by a pack in another direction, and then another and perhaps another, until the forest seemed alive with **wolves**.



In early times, wild animals, especially bears and wolves, were great sources of annoyance. It is not known that any person ever became a victim to the rapacity of these animals, but many cases are recorded of terrible frights.

Many swine that were permitted to roam and feed in the woods were destroyed by bears, and great care was necessary to protect sheep against the wolves. For years the slumbers of people were interrupted and night was made hideous by the howling of the latter.

The record of the proceedings of the first board of supervisors of Genesee County, of which Wyoming then (1805) constituted a part, contains the following:

"The board, after considering the necessity and utility of destroying wolves, passed a vote to allow a bounty of five dollars apiece for the scalp and ears of each wolf taken and killed in the county aforesaid since its organization."

The board of 1804 "resolved that certificates given to Indians for wolf scalps shall be certified in the presence of a white person of suitable age, who shall attest the same."

The price paid for the scalps of wolves in different years ranged from \$5 to \$45 per head for grown ones, and from \$2 to \$20 for whelps. Between 1803 and 1821, when the payment of bounties was discontinued, an aggregate of \$6,782 was paid for 793 wolves and 8 panthers. It was thought that the large bounties offered here induced people to capture **wolves** elsewhere, bring them into this county and kill them, and obtain the price of their scalps; and this may have led to a discontinuance of the bounties.

Wild animals abounded in those days here, as elsewhere. In seasons of scarcity, like that of 1816-17, wild game, such as deer, etc., and fish from the lake, were welcome additions to the supplies of the hungry settlers. Bears, as well as wolves, were a pest to the settlers. Mr. Otis states that of five swine which he brought to the country, the bears killed four, with their families, though he had the satisfaction of killing an equal number of bears. Bounties were offered for the scalps of **wolves**, and they were soon thinned out

In the summer of 1804 several more families or young men came into the town. The settlers began to clear away the forest, and supply themselves with teams, cows, sheep and swine, which were allowed to get their living in the woods.

But the bears, wolves, and some other beasts of the forest were very destructive of unprotected domestic animals, and for several years it was necessary to guard the sheep to protect them from the **wolves**.

Mr. Keeny's hardships had but just begun. He owed ten dollars or more for the transportation of his goods. His stock of provisions was reduced, on his arrival, to a few pounds of flour and a part of a salt fish. His house was a rude one of its kind. It had no chimney other than a wide opening. The fireplace had not even a stone back wall, the fire being kept at a safe distance from the wooden wall. Their first night's sleep in their new house was disturbed by the howling of the **wolves**, with which the wilderness abounded.

Within the memory of men now living, the agents of the Amsterdam merchants first offered for sale this portion of the three million six hundred thousand acres they purchased of Robert Morris on July 20th, 1793. Three years after the land office was opened at Batavia, in the year 1805, William Bristol, an unmarried man from Columbia County, N.Y., joined a surveying party in the charge of William Peacock, and engaged in surveying this town. After a journey of twenty-nine miles he reached the O-si-ki. The primeval forest of deciduous trees, with patches of pine and hemlock, was unbroken. The graceful elm, the towering maple, the stately beech, here attained enormous size. Indian trails were the only paths. Bears, **wolves** and deer roamed at will. The rich bottom land was inviting, and Mr. Bristol selected a tract on both sides of the creek, on which he lived more than half a century, and where his remains were deposited in 1859.

The tide of immigration—the first wave of which had borne them hither—continued with increasing flow. Settlers came more rapidly, the smoke from their hearths curled upward at shorter intervals, and clearing encroached more and more on the surrounding wilderness. The hissing and rushing of the whirlwinds of flame was oftener heard, as the trees that had been felled and had become dry were consumed. Small fields of waving corn, and here and there verdant meadows, were to be seen. The music of numerous cowbells was heard by day, and "drowsy tinklings lulled the distant folds", where sheep were herded to protect them from the **wolves** at night. The merry laughter and shouts of children might be heard as they frolicked in the woods. The frontier settlement was fast becoming a rural neighborhood.

"Fear isn't so difficult to understand. After all, weren't we all frightened as children? Nothing has changed since Little Red Riding Hood faced the big bad wolf. What frightens us today is exactly the same sort of thing that frightened us yesterday. It's just a different wolf. This fright complex is rooted in every individual." — Alfred Hitchcock



Sheldon School # 15 taken abt. 1934-1935 at Royce Corners, taught at the time by Stella T. Kral from Gainesville.

Christmas Program presented by students attending Sheldon School #15

In the pristine one room school house located at Royce Corners, the children were excited to put on a program. The cast and crew are listed below:

Welcome song – Frances Kral
 A Greeting - Joan Almeter
 The Story of Christmas – Elnora Wolcott
 Acoustic – Ernest Parrish
 The best Tree of All- Shirley Wolcott
 An Act of Courtesy – William Meyer
 Pantomime – Catherine Reisdorf & Elnora Wolcott
 Hurrah! Hurrah! Gilbert Parrish
 A Joke on Santa – Eleanor Durfee
 Dolly's Christmas – Nancy Almeter
Play – Cinderella's Stocking by School
 A Lady Santa Claus – Helen Royce
 Santa in a Flat – Arthur Durfee
 Our Tree – Esther Royce
 Song "Tis Christmas" School
 Santa Claus and a Mouse – Catherine Reisdorf
 Fair Warning to Santa Claus – Harold Parrish
 The jolliest Night – Eloise Durfee
Play Darning a Christmas Stocking – Arthur Durfee and Ernest Parrish
 An Impatient Waiter – Kamesy Meyer
 Good Night – Margaret Almeter
 Song "Song of Christmas Greeting" - School

In an old one-room country school in the late 1930s and 1940s, first through eighth grades were taught by one teacher, but the number of children in all grades seldom exceeded 15 to 18 combined. Grade size was hardly ever more than three. Before school started in the fall, someone would mow the schoolyard and the school would be scrubbed down inside and coal would be hauled in for the winter.

The teacher may have also been the janitor, carrying out the ashes from the previous day and getting a fire going for warmth when the children arrived. There may not have been electricity or plumbing or indoor toilets. A bucket of water was pumped from a well outside and pupils brought their own tin cups for drinking. There were separate outdoor toilets for the boys and the girls. Our country schools were all about two miles apart, and many children walked 1- 3 miles. Roads may have crossed a creek and creek bottom, and when it flooded, they had to detour through fields and pastures. They forded the creeks when the road was filled in with snow.

School began after Labor Day and ended in the middle of April. There were no snow days and few holidays, just Thanksgiving weekend and a week at Christmastime. Children carried their lunches in brown paper bags or a tin dinner bucket, some of which included a thermos. Most of the time, those thermoses didn't last long after all the bumping they took. In warm weather, all the windows and doors were kept open. Schools had a belfry with a large bell. The teacher rang it twice each morning, once at 8:30 for a warning and again at 9, which meant you better be ready to enter the school. It also rang for recess and the end of the lunch hour.

At recess, children played softball, hide and seek, Red Rover, marbles, mumblety-peg and many other games. In winter they played fox and goose and had snowball fights.

On the first day of school, students may have noticed a slender hickory stick, about 3 feet long, lying on the teacher's desk. The teacher stood up, picked up the stick and laid out the rules of behavior he planned to enforce, emphasizing his point with a smack on the desk with the stick. They were likely intimidated. The stick was often used. Today, this would not be tolerated, but back then, this was accepted discipline.

In fact, if a child misbehaved in school, a worse punishment would await them at home. There wasn't much juvenile delinquency in those days.

When youngsters were called to recite in front of the room, the younger class members learned a lot listening to the older children.

At Christmas, the teacher may have brought a small tree with tinsel and popcorn to school. Decorations were made from construction paper and popcorn was strung around the tree. To a child's eyes, the tree was awesome.

The children would put on a Christmas play for their parents, sing Christmas song or recite poems... Names may have also been drawn and had a gift exchange, with the price not exceeding 10 to 15 cents. A favorite gift was a Big Little Book, which cost about a dime. Perhaps this is what it was like in this one room school house on Royce Corners. To be sure, the event made a lasting memory.

Those one-room schoolhouses, as shown below, are gone now, and just the memories and folklore remain.



TOWNSHIP OF
Sheldon
Historical
Society



PO Box 122,
Strykersville, NY 14145

“These fallen heroes represent the character of a nation who has a long history of patriotism and honor - and a nation who has fought many battles to keep our country free from threats of terror.” *Michael N. Castle*

The Historical Society welcomes new members! If you find local History interesting, we hope that you make a membership contribution and join us. It is open to anyone with an interest in the history of Sheldon, or a desire to volunteer services without restriction to age or place of residence. We maintain a School House Museum that is state chartered. There is always work to do to maintain this structure and to continue our research of data and archives and preserve treasured artifacts.

(Attention: *If you are not a member and wish to receive your copy of the newsletter please join*)

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

DATE: _____

Make check payable to The Town of Sheldon Historical Society.

Mail To:

Donna Kirsch, financial secretary.
4458 Richardson Rd.,
Arcade, NY 14009



A nostalgic tabloid; you won't want to miss it.

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Hunting season
Christmas play
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