



Township of Sheldon Historical Society

"At work preserving the history of "The Town of Sheldon"

& Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter

Volume 4 Issue 2

May 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 Board Members & Curators

10/2014 - 10/2015

Pres. - Michael Almeter
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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.

Town of Sheldon Historian: Barb Durfee Phone- 585-535-7322

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Newsletter compiled by Mary Ann Metzger & Jeanne Mest, with the help of many volunteers. Submissions are appreciated.

Meetings are held at 7:00pm at the Schoolhouse, on the third Thursday of the month, Feb. through October. Our next meeting will be on June 18, 2015. All are welcome to attend. Please come and bring a friend.

*I want to welcome everyone to come see us at our annual **Town-wide yard sale weekend, June 6-7. The Schoolhouse Museum will be open both days** and we would love to have you stop in and browse around. At our last historical society meeting we were finalizing plans. We had some animated discussions about the various tasks that needed to be accomplished in order to make the weekend go smoothly. Each year I am reminded again of how much work goes into this event. Most of us just look forward to it, without giving it much thought. As soon as the meeting ended, some folks started to assemble our **Grand Prize, a lovely two-person swing to be raffled off that weekend.** We will start setting up Thursday night; tents, basket raffle, etc. This year should prove to be even more special, with the musical program that is planned for Sunday. We are so excited that our town clerk, Carol Zittel, was able to apply and be awarded with a grant from the **Arts Council for Wyoming County, to sponsor:***

**** "MUSIC ON MAIN STREET"**

*Performers: **Northwind Family Band, Folk o' the Road & County Lines***



We hope you will join us on Sunday, June 7, between 11:45-4:00 pm, under the tent across the street from the Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum.

Hope to see you there. From Jeanne Mest, Archival Curator
**** This program is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; administered in Wyoming County by the Arts Council for Wyoming County.**

Other events of Strykersville Yard Sale Weekend:
At the Schoolhouse: restored classroom & local history; theme basket raffle, Boy Scouts hot dog stand, Kiwanis roast beef stand, Masons Sausage/Fries Stand, St. John Neumann bake sale & ice cream stand, local restaurant & store specials, American Legion chicken BBQ on Sunday.
This should be a fun event - mark your calendars!



1907 Dr. George McQuilkin of Varysburg & daughter Marion

Ghosts, Murder, Mayhem and Catastrophes

Our meetings of the Sheldon Historical Society are always interesting; you never know what you will hear there or will come across in our scrapbooks and files. We have people who can tell you stories about family or ancestors that you would never find anywhere else. As our recent meeting ended, well, that was when the real excitement began. A conversation started about a house that is said to be regularly **haunted, by one or two brothers**. They weren't sure of the details, but the occupants are so used to it, they consider their **ghosts** to be friendly and they don't bat an eye when they feel a presence there or when something moves that isn't supposed to. So, I thought, let's try to figure out who once lived in that house that might be haunting it. One of our members with a fantastic memory recalled the name of a family who lived there once, and something about a mysterious death.

So we checked our **Obituary** files, and found some of the family members, but not the victim. Next we looked in our **Catastrophe** scrapbook, and when it wasn't there, we went to the **Crime** file. It wasn't there either, but as I was looking through the files, several other old yellowed articles caught my attention.

The thing that I love about history, but makes me crazy, is how you will read one little thing and it gets your curiosity going and before you know it you are spending hours searching on the web or books to find out what happened. And it doesn't end there, for while you are looking for one thing you stumble across another story that also intrigues you, and you have to find out about that as well.

By looking through old local newspapers, I have learned so much about the lives of my parents & grandparents, and so on, more than anyone ever told us. Back then **everything** made the newspaper, even when people visited each other, or got together for Sunday dinner, so you can get a good idea of what their lives were like, who they spent their time with and what was important to them. Old newspaper articles also give many graphic details about accidents and crimes. Sometimes they give you **TMI** (Too Much Information). They spell out details in those old articles that you wouldn't find in the paper today, and maybe would rather not know, anyway!

So after my evening at the museum, I was online the minute I got home, searching the old newspaper website, and not destined to get much sleep that night.

My quest for the history of the mysterious death didn't actually lead me to a murder or even a definite answer. It turned out the man could have died from a bad fall, or even from drinking bootleg liquor. This was during **Prohibition**, a nationwide constitutional ban on the sale or production of alcohol that lasted from 1920 to 1933. The mystery was never completely solved, as far as I could tell, and this young man may or may not have been the **alleged ghost**.

Next, my search uncovered another unsolved local crime that took place in **1849**. A man was accused of **murder**, but the defense claimed it was a suicide, and there was not enough strong evidence

for a conviction, so he went free, even though it was said that the members of the jury and the community felt he was guilty. Again, the old articles I found presented different facts and conclusions on the case. But the thing that struck me most about this one was that the accused person was said to be part of a **local gang of thugs who had "committed every crime in the calendar, with the exception of murder. For the last ten years, the town has harbored a gang of ruffians (and he was chief among them) who have rendered themselves notorious for their depredations on society, in the destruction of property and other outrages. There has never been conviction of the rascals of these crimes, for lack of actual proof. Whatever the result of this trial is, we trust that it may be the means of breaking up of a gang of land pirates."**

Another report said: "20 or 30 of this gang rode into the village between 1 and 2 o'clock on the morning on Wednesday last, to affect a rescue of the prisoner, but on being discovered, speedily retreated" Really? This sounds more like the **Wild West**, not Wyoming County, but when you remember it was **1849**, and they would have been on **horseback**, well you could just picture that, couldn't you, after growing up watching old western movies.

About that point, I was starting to get upset. When you are reading these old stories, sometimes you forget and you have to remind yourself that they took place over 150 years ago! But did I stop reading? Oh no, I had to continue on.

Our **Catastrophe** file is quite interesting, with its details of fires, accidents, crimes and unusual weather-related events. The **"Accident"** section began with a story dated **July 4, 1897, about two teenaged boys who tried to outrun a train with their horse and buggy. "Death at a Crossing – Two Killed by Special Train from Buffalo"** revealed that a group of entertainers had chartered a **special train** to take them to **Lime Lake** to give some sort of exhibition. The two young men had left a family reunion on an errand, and were hurrying back with the ice so the family could make ice cream. Under normal conditions they could have crossed the track in time, but this train was traveling at an unusual speed of about **60 miles an hour**, and caught the buggy squarely in the center of the track. There were a lot of gruesome details related in this article. It was a tragic end for all, and later that day when the train arrived at Lime Lake, they were not allowed to give their performance anyway, because it was a Sunday!

In the years that followed, our scrapbooks show that way too many people were hurt or killed by car accidents. While I was reading through them, I just kept thinking, whether it was 1897 or 2015, people need to slow down and be more careful! A further chapter went on to describe **earthquakes, landslides and several tornados or twisters** that had been felt in our area. I had no idea.

As I glanced through our section on **"Fires"**, I noticed a clipping about a **barn fire in 1923**. I wondered who was **Dr. McCall**, and why did a doctor have a farm? I remembered seeing a person by that name in a photo from a Schiltz family reunion; I don't know if he

was related or just a friend, or even what his first name was. Soon I began to think about the country doctors we have had in our area, so I turned to a special scrapbook "**Doctors in the Town of Sheldon**" where I found several articles on **Dr. McCall**, as well as **Dr. George McQuilkin** and **Dr. Sewell Brooks**. They all served our community at around the same time in history and one of the things they had in common was how they had to deal with the devastating **Spanish Influenza**, during the winter of **1917-18**.

Dr. McCall from **Strykersville** is remembered by many for his devotion during the influenza epidemic. It seemed that no family escaped this illness & many died from it. "The winter was especially severe and many roads almost impassable, even with the horse drawn vehicles. **Dr. McCall used a top cutter drawn by a good team of driving horses. He had four horses, two teams, and for a while that winter, he was on the road day and night. He employed two drivers, Eli Kensinger and Angus McCall, his nephew.** They took turns driving the Doctor from house to house. **The doctor attended the patient or patients, and ate his meals at their homes.**" While he was seeing the patients, the men of the family would unhitch the tired horses from the cutter, put them in their barns, and feed and water them. **The doctor slept between house calls;** these catnaps were sometimes all he could get during this difficult time. **Often the cutter would tip over in the snow-drifted roads and the doctor and the driver were forced to shovel out both the horses and the cutter.** He went home only to change drivers and fill his bag with a fresh supply of medicine, and then he would continue on his calls.

The "**Doctor**" scrapbook also contained an impressive article from Historical Wyoming, April 1982, "**The Doctor and His Medicine**", by Anita Hayes, a noted local historian. **Dr. Sewell Brooks** was a physician and also an inventor, and eventually his medical practice was replaced by a company he started called **Duoform**, where they made "medicines, flavoring extracts, toilet articles and other goods". He began this company on East Ave. in North Java but moved it to Attica in 1917, where they built a larger factory at the foot of West Main St., near the railroad, so products could be shipped all over the country.

Dr. George McQuilken was a country doctor in Varysburg for 50 years, from 1906 until he retired in 1956. He was said to have delivered between **1000 to 2000 babies**. "**One snow-choked winter night early in his career, he was called to deliver a baby. He battled two hours to reach the home two miles away with the help of two men and a horse.**" "**I delivered the baby and stayed the night**" recalled the doctor. "**The next morning the father gave me \$5. But 20 years later to the day, the father, then living in Pennsylvania, sent me a check for the rest.**" "In the beginning, Dr. McQuilken used only a horse and buggy. Long after he got his first car in 1914 he continued to rely on a horse and cutter in the winter. **Perhaps the worse medical crisis in his career came in 1918-20 when the great flu epidemic struck the nation.** Nearly everybody around Varysburg, including the doctor, got sick, but only one person lost the battle." In fact, he almost lost his daughter from the disease, while he was out caring for others. "**A Village in the Valley**" said that Dr. McQuilkin will go down in history as the last practicing physician in the village with the longest service to the villagers.

As I perused these old yellow newspaper articles, I attempted to look some of them up on the old newspaper website. To my dismay, many of them could not be found. Sometimes it is hard to get just the right "search" words to find particular articles you are looking for. Or it could be that the articles have just never been copied and put on a website. **Looking at the scrapbooks in front of you may be the only way you will ever see them in print.** There is nothing like going in person to a library, a historical museum, or a county records building. At our schoolhouse museum, we have a lot of hands-on information that can help you with your research. There is so much history packed into our scrapbooks, family files, and Historical Wyoming's that can help you learn more about our ancestors, and the times in which they lived.

Best of all, we have local people there who actually remember the events, or knew our ancestors, or their ancestors knew ours, and they have great stories that help us piece together our family history. So many interesting things have happened right here in our town; the **Silver Mine, drilling for oil, refugees** escaping on this route from **Buffalo** as it **burned** during the **War of 1812**; even **Indian** women and children hiding in **Stony Brook Glen** during **Sullivan's Raid** in the **Revolutionary War**. Knowing about the local historic events helps us to better understand what our ancestors' lives may have been like. We use Ancestry.com a lot, but one of our other favorite places to look online is the family tree that Scott Barvian maintains on Rootsweb.com. His tree of over 9,000 names is an amazing source of information on just about anyone who ever lived in Sheldon, Bennington and Java. We are so thankful for all the work he has done, accumulating this data.

At times I wonder what stories others in our community may know, and I wish they would come and share them with us. One thing I am curious about is how and where they found oil in Sheldon, and how extensive was it? Two of our great-great aunts in the 1800s married men from different states who had worked together in Oil City, PA, and I wondered how they ever met these two sisters from Sheldon. It was suggested to me that there was an oil craze on at that time, and they could have come to Sheldon to drill for oil. All these little pieces fit together and help us imagine why they did the things they did or why they ended up moving to certain areas.

I have only touched the surface on some of these interesting events, so if you want to know "the rest of the story" you will just have to visit our museum. While there you will also learn about many more wonderful families and individuals in our history. Submitted by Jeanne Mest

Sources: Anita Hayes, "The Doctor and His Medicine", "A Village in the Valley", Historical Wyoming, April 1982 & Oct. 1979; www.fultonhistory.com; www.history.com

The large new barn, silo, milk house and granary on the Dr. McCall farm were burned to the ground on Monday night, November 13th, 1923. It is thought that the fire started from a lantern exploding. It is a heavy loss as there were over sixty loads of unthreshed grain, lots of hay and all the farming tools, a Ford touring car and other things which were burned. The only things saved were the horses. There were no other cattle on the place at the time. There is some insurance, but not enough to cover the loss.

From Newspaper Clipping

George Genealogy as presented

By Jack George Brannan

b. 1936 - d. 2014

Hall of Fame Journalist, Sheldon Descendant

Jack Brannan died on May 3rd, 2014 at his home in Kansas City and was buried at St. Francis Catholic Church in St. Paul, Kansas with his ancestors. He was a descendant of the large family of Innocent George which emigrated from Fouches, Belgium to the Sheldon area starting in the 1830's. The family of Jack's great-great-grandfather Nicholas Amos George (1809-1887) moved to southeast Kansas (Osage Mission, later renamed St. Paul) in the early 1870's, and has since spread across the western United States and Canada.

Jack's obituary details his long career in journalism, starting in Oklahoma in the 1950's and advancing through the ranks of United Press International, from the White House and State Department, to South America and in New York City. He later managed the news and media departments at the New York Stock Exchange. He ended his career with the Los Angeles Times and was elected to the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame in 1999.

His obituary says that he began making visits to Fouches in 1986 where he researched the family in those pre-Internet days. He wrote to me in 2003 that he continued to make frequent visits "where I feel as much at home among fifth and sixth cousins and their neighbors and friends as I would if I, too, had been born and lived there all my life."

He presented his findings at George family reunions in Kansas. Excerpts from his speech at the 1992 reunion: *My curiosity about the George family first began as to the geographic location. Where did we come from in Europe? And I went after that, which is the village of Fouches. It is very small, not on any regular maps of Belgium. A few things to clear up. First the nationality of the George family, historically by heritage, by language, is Luxembourg. We are not French, not Alsace-Lorraine, not German, but strictly Luxembourg. The language that was spoken by the Georges until the second born American generation, was a dialect of German called Letzebergisch.*

The name George originally is a surname. It was spelled without the final 'e'. It was GEORG, pronounced Gay-orja. And that evolved from the Latin word Georgish, which means farmer. And in the early 1600's, there were two men who lived in the area of what is now southeastern Belgium, a father and a son. And in the parish records they were known simply as Johannes Georgish-meaning John the farmer. One after another. In 1681 the second Johannes Georgish took a newborn son to the church in Hachy Belgium,

which is a twenty minute walk from Fouches, and which is the only church in the area. And he had that child baptized, and his name too was Johannes. And then the record started of the full name, because he was registered in the parish as Johannes Georg. And that marks the beginning of the family with a formal surname, in the sense that the same surname was passed on from generation to generation.

For the first 150 years of their existence, the families existed under the name of George. They lived in an area of about 25 square miles of what is now southeastern Belgium. ... It was not until 1834 that the first George left to come to America. He was one of the sons of Innocent; his name was Peter... in 1834, Peter, Anna and their nine children left Fouches, walked 250 miles to the port of LeHavre, France, took a boat named "Constellation"; it was a freighter, a wooden square rigged freighter. And spent six weeks crossing the Atlantic. They arrived in the harbor of New York.

By 1872 most of the Kansas Georges were here. It is not really known and it is still a mystery to the New York Georges, most of whom I know, as to why this one family split away from the community up there and came out here; it's a mystery that will never be resolved. Possibly simple reasons, it had to do with some family dispute up there. But none the less, if they hadn't done that, we'd be having this reunion up around Buffalo somewhere now instead of St. Paul.

*The reason we are Luxembourgers and not Belgians is because Belgium didn't exist until 1831 and the southeastern part of today's Belgium until 1839 was part of Luxembourg. The period 1831-1839 was very, very difficult for families to make their way. And that prompted some of the immigration. We came here, we came to Sheldon and since then I have found Georges in almost every state of the country, and in Canada. And I'm sure that they are even more widespread than that. But, the European Georges in essence are still in that same 25 square mile area around the town of Arlon. Arlon you can find on your maps, in the southeastern part of Belgium. It is almost at the Luxembourg border.
<end of quotes from 1992 speech>*

In January 1993 he wrote to his cousin Rev. Severin George (1908-1993) about his hopes for the Buffalo Bills to defeat Dallas in the upcoming Super Bowl, and about yet another visit to Fouches and about Innocent George (1748-1839):

"... Innocent George had not been just a simple farmer all his life but, rather, had started out as a tailor and had risen to the rank of master tailor with a shop and employees of his own by 1785. But in that year, a fire destroyed the town of Arlon, taking his tailor shop there

with it. In the well documented history of the fire that I'd found, it was noted that Innocent George had lost his business in the fire but, unlike so many others, he had not lost his home because he didn't live in Arlon."

When I started researching my own George genealogy (through the Conrad and Bartz families), I worked with several Kansas Georges, including Jack. He explained to me that "My interest has been in the actual story of the family, how it originated, how it evolved under the circumstances of the times, what their lives were like, the motivations that prompted some to emigrate and others to stay on in their forest and farm villages in

what was Luxembourg." Ever the journalist, Jack Brannon expected his work to be used properly and accurately. I hope this article meets those standards. Although Jack left no descendants, his family history work leaves a legacy for generations to come.

Submitted by Scott Barvian, Mesa, AZ 11/10/14

About the author: Scott Barvian grew up in Sheldon and has lived in the Phoenix area since 1986. He works as an engineer and started compiling a Sheldon family tree database in 2001. For more information please see: <http://wc.rootsweb.com/~sbarvian>

Legion Post #637 Memorial Day Observances

Thank you members of the Six Star American Legion post. You proudly honored our veterans at the following locations:

Monday, May 25, 2015

9am: St. Patrick's Cemetery, Java Center

10am: Johnsonburg Cemetery

10:20am: Varysburg Cemetery

11am: North Java Cemetery

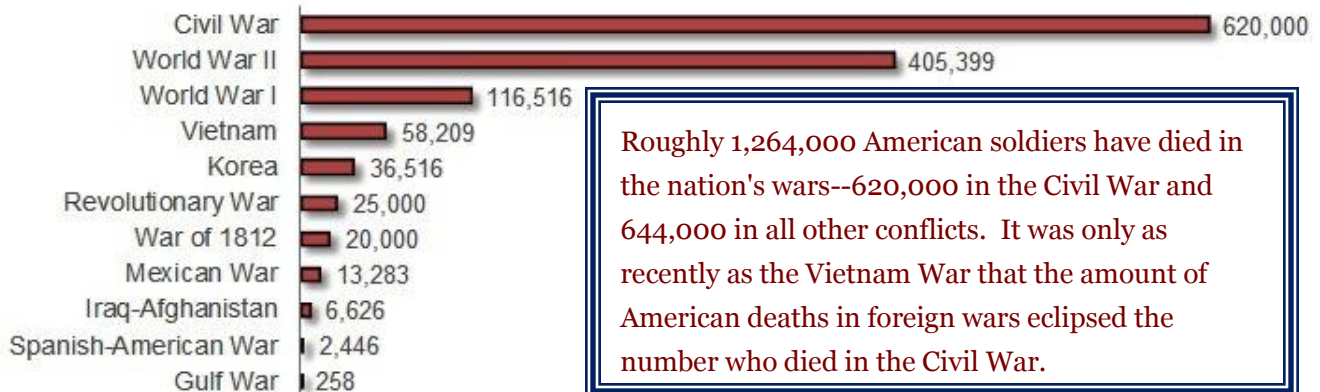
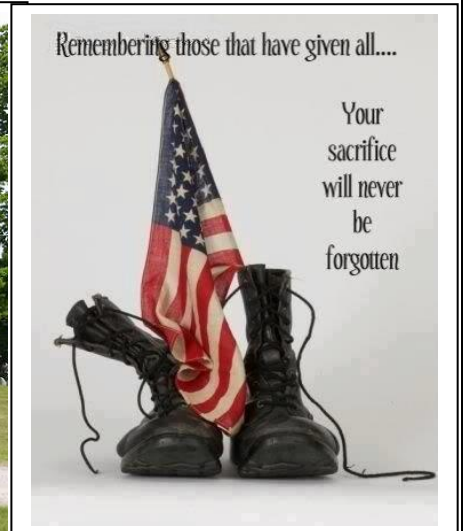
11:30am: St. Cecilia's Cemetery, corner of Centerline & N. Sheldon Rds.

11:45am: Dutch Hollow Cemetery, near corner of Centerline

& Dutch Hollow Rds. 12pm: Java Village Cemetery

12:15pm: Strykersville Cemetery

The Civil War began when the Confederates bombarded Union soldiers at Fort Sumter, South Carolina on April 12, 1861. The war ended in spring, 1865. Robert E. Lee surrendered the last major Confederate army to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865. The last battle was fought at Palmito Ranch, Texas, on May 13, 1865.



Roughly 1,264,000 American soldiers have died in the nation's wars--620,000 in the Civil War and 644,000 in all other conflicts. It was only as recently as the Vietnam War that the amount of American deaths in foreign wars eclipsed the number who died in the Civil War.

Spring plowing

"You should first follow the plow if you want to dance the harvest jig." *Bible quote*

After the long winter of 2014-15, it didn't take long to see the farmers in the Sheldon area out working in the fields. I always thought of Spring as the season of plowing, cultivating and planting. Thinking about the changes in the methods used I found out many interesting facts. Some I have put together on the following two pages.

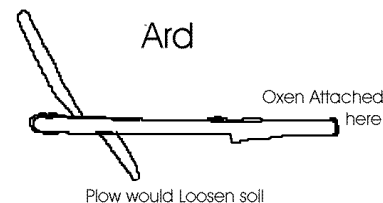


Walking plows were produced B.T. (before tractors) in many styles to meet a wide variety of soil conditions.

Did You Know That?

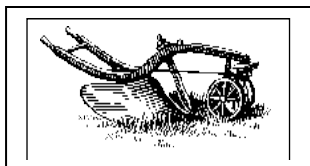
- On average a plowman and a two-horse team on a single-bottom walking plow can, depending on the width of furrow, plow from 1 to 1½ acres in a day.
- When plowing a nine-inch wide furrow, the plowman would walk eleven miles for every acre plowed. For an average twelve-inch furrow he would walk 8¼ miles per acre and at least 12 miles as he approached 1½ acres per day. Sheldon farmers of old traveled great distances — and that's just in the furrow.

The earliest plows were forked sticks and timbers. These plows were called anard. The early plows simply loosened the soil.



Breaking the Sod

For over 100 years, American farm tools were made by local blacksmiths. An important tool to early farmers was the plow. The farmers used the plow to loosen up the soil to allow moisture to reach the roots of crops and to keep down the weeds. Plows were made of wood, held together with metal bolts and bars. Some blacksmiths experimented with changes to make their plows turn better furrows. (A furrow is the shallow trench of turned soil left behind the plow.) In the 1800s cast iron parts were added to the cutting edge. Prairie soil stuck to the wooden or iron plows. Plowing took a yoke (pair) of oxen and three workers: one to drive the team, one to steer the plow, and the third to clean dirt off (scour) the blade. Or one person could do all three jobs in turn—very slow work!



CHANGES SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS HAVE WROUGHT.

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of this country, or of any country, is the marvelous growth of labor-saving appliances. In 1818 Covington had no plows except the "bull plow," made of wood, with an iron point, sharpened and put on by the blacksmith. It turned the soil very imperfectly, and the dirt adhered to it persistently. The steel plow, the chilled plow, the sulky plow, leave little room for improvement this side of the steam plow, which is on trial.

WY. Co. History 1880

Did you hear about the farmer who plowed his field with a steamroller? He wanted to grow mashed potatoes.

The agriculture of those times, if agriculture it may be termed, was such as is never seen now. Very few at the present day have witnessed the process of preparing the virgin soil for the first crop. The timber was often girdled in advance, so that when felled, as it often was, in what were termed wind rows, much of it would burn as it lay, being partially or wholly dried, by kindling the fire at the windward end of these rows. After the first burn some of the remaining fragments were "niggered" into pieces that could be easily moved, and the whole was drawn together with oxen and "logged up" for the final burning. Many in the neighborhood usually joined in this work, and the "logging bees" were at the same time occasions when work was done and social intercourse enjoyed. When the burning was completed and the ashes collected the ground was sometimes made ready for the seed by harrowing with a three cornered harrow, which was often hewed from a crotched tree, with either large wooden pins set at intervals, or very large and strong iron teeth. Such a harrow was drawn over the ground among the stumps to fit the soil for its first crop when the roots were not sufficiently decayed to permit the use of a plow. In using this primitive harrow in these clearings the driver found it necessary to keep always at a respectful distance, for it often bounded from side to side in a manner not compatible with safety at close quarters. In cases where plowing could be done the old bull plow was used. This was an uncouth implement, with wrought iron share and a wooden moldboard, such as is now scarcely ever seen even among relics of the past. In rare cases a wooden plow, hewn out of a crotched tree, was used.

From Wyo. Co. History 1880

SHOULDER TO THE PLOW

*My horses teamed in tandem
throw their backs into their work,
with their great hooves plodding down-
field, breaking up great clods of earth.
Yoked in common labor;
they and I determine how
we will till our soil together,
with our shoulders to the plow.*

*With my eye fixed on the fencepost
at the far end of my field;
with my horses snorting loudly,
to our task we jointly yield.
They, to demands of harness,
and I, to sweat of brow;
while the pull of earth's resistance
puts my shoulder to the plow.*

*The stubborn soil is balky
as the plowshare carves its groove;
while the countless, unrelenting rocks
crop up, as if to prove
they've claimed the land as theirs;
and I'm left squatting low,
lifting stones, and deftly leaning
with my shoulder to the plow.*

*My team and I stay on the move,
our furrows deep and true;
while the lingering sun and lengthening
days prod us on 'til work is through.
When the pathway hardens,
and stones your footsteps slow;
throw your back into your labor,
put your shoulder to the plow!
- Wayne Kelley
from *Given to Verse in Vermont**

The Jethro Wood plow was described in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* of Dec 1874:

Jethro Wood, of Scipio, Cayuga County, New York, patented improvements in **1819**. He made the best and most popular plow of its day, and was entitled to much credit for skill and enterprise, but lost his fortune in developing his invention and defending his rights. He overestimated, however, the extent of novelty in his invention. He seems to have thought it the first iron plow. Its peculiar merit consisted in the mode of securing the cast iron portions together by lugs and locking pieces, doing away with screw-bolts and much weight, complexity, and expense. Wood did more than any other person to drive out of use the cumbersome contrivances common throughout the country, giving a lighter, cheaper, and more effective implement. It was the first plow in which the parts that were most exposed to wear could be renewed in the field by the substitution of cast pieces.

People were apprehensive, as they are today. Many farmers back in the early 1800s frowned on the first cast-iron plows. They believed that the metal would poison the land, reduce fertility and promote the growth of weeds and that the point of the share would soon wear off. The first plow with a really good interchangeable cast-iron moldboard, landside and standard or frog was patented by John Jethro Wood in 1819.

Wood plows couldn't plow all types of soil without breaking. John Deere thought about it and was convinced that only a plow with moldboard, made of good steel that isn't rusted, would solve this problem. Deere moved from Vermont to Grand Detour, Illinois in 1836. He invented a blade which was self-polishing and combined the share and moldboard into a one piece plow. He made his first plow out of an old blade saw. He then did tests on different types of soil.

John Deere's plow solved the problem of sticking. It also pulled more easily than any plow that had been tried before. It allowed farmers to switch from slow oxen to faster teams of horses for plowing power. New technologies allowed farmers to work more efficiently and faster. The Colter, a sharp wheel-shaped piece on plows, cut into the surface of the ground to help the plow blade move through the soil more easily. Even so, a farmer walking behind a plow could only plow two acres a day. A plow pulled by two horses with a seat where the farmer could ride was called a sulky plow. With a two-horse sulky that could plow two rows at a time, a farmer could plow up to seven acres a day.

Many problems prevented the making of the steel plows. Steel was hard to find. In the beginning steel had to come from Great Britain. Ten years after the first plow was made, Deere's company was making 1000 plows a year.

Compiled by
Mary Ann Metzger

Show us a farmer who is trying to look into the reason of things, and we will show you a man who will grow in ability every day of his experiences. It takes that kind of a man to be a successful farm manager.
W.D. Hoard Founder 1885

It seems hardly necessary to call attention to the wagons, ploughs, harrows, threshing-machines, harvesters, mowers, wheel-rakes, etc., etc., of the present day, and contrast them with the awkward and uncouth implements of former times; but if this is done the adaptation of these to their existing circumstances should be remembered, and the additional fact should be borne in mind that the improved tools of the present day would not then have been available.

From History of Wyoming Co. 1880

Then comes the Spring
PlantingPlanting



JUNE 20, 1943 TONY FIRESTONE CORN PLAN



JUNE 10, 1943 TONY FIRESTONE GRAIN DRILL

TOWNSHIP OF
Sheldon
Historical
Society



PO Box 122,
Strykersville, NY 14145

"A man's country is not a certain area of land, of mountains, rivers, and woods, but it is a principle and patriotism is loyalty to that principle."
George William Curtis

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
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NAME: _____

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Highlights inside this issue include:

Another George Story
Follow the Plow
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