



Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter



An update on our progress as a Society and a Chartered Museum "A New Look at Old News From our Town"

We are closed for the winter, but any time the weather and the sidewalk permits, we will be glad to open up the museum for you and give you the tour. We try year-round to answer your historical inquiries, so please feel free to get in touch. Our monthly meetings will resume on February 20, 2020.

The Town of Sheldon Historical Society would like to extend their best wishes to you for a Happy Holiday Season. Again we thank the Java-Strykersville Kiwanis for placing a beautiful Christmas tree from Almeter's Tree Farm in front of the Schoolhouse Museum. They have done this for many years and it is much appreciated. This tree always adds to the Holiday spirit in Sheldon.

*O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
Much pleasure dost thou bring me!
For every year the Christmas tree,
Brings to us all both joy and glee.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
Much pleasure dost thou bring me!*



THE OTTO FAMILY OF TALHEIM

This is an account of German immigrants who came to America in 1843, taking eight weeks to cross. It has been condensed for this article, but the original was a diary describing each day in detail. In 1846, several more families would leave Talheim for America, and some settled in Sheldon. Their story begins on page 4.

As we entered on our passage from Hamburg to North America at 8:00 AM on the 20th of June, 1843, one saw tears in many eyes. Several brothers of our faith stood at the levee wishing us God's blessings. The steamer placed itself in front of two of our ships, containing 297 souls, to tug us to the open sea. The greatest part was on the deck. I also was gone to the deck. I felt heavy around my heart, now that I should see my fatherland the last time, when suddenly the voices sounded in the between-deck, "All Praise and Honor the Highest Good". We all hurried down, everybody took hold of his hymnal and sang along. One saw some with tears in the eyes. We heard two cannon shots. We let not disturb us. After we had sung and prayed, we went to the deck again. Our ship had cast anchor, we stayed there till the 25th, waited for a good wind and sailed into the open sea. The wind was against us. Our ship had to tack. Most all of us were on the deck. One shouted here, another there, "Look what big fish!" They jumped courageously in the tumultuous waves.

(Continued on page 2)



Old Castle, Talheim

The happy sight-seeing did not last very long, when the common sea sickness came. Some began vomiting; it hit the women the most. It was so bad with some that they spit blood. The 27th everybody was in bed but one, who did not get the sea-sickness. The Lord had strengthened him so he could take care of us all, and another one who overcame it soon stood at his side.

The 28th, early at 5:00 AM, I heard a voice, "Do you sleep? My husband is dead!" It was Mrs. Heintzen. During the night the Lord, our God, had called his soul from him after a long serious illness. All those knowing him got up to be present at the funeral. The dead body was placed in a sack and sewed up. Then they brought it on deck, put it on a board and tied stones to it. Now we sang a hymn, then one read scripture. We said the Lord's Prayer. While we were singing a hymn, they sank the corpse into the deep ocean. It looked real horrible, but the dear God's word says to us that the ocean will return the dead at the last judgement, which strengthened us again.

The 29th we felt already better, but some had it very bad. For a few days we ate almost nothing at all. The wind still was against us. July 1st the waves did not roar so high. We all could stroll on the deck. But on July 3rd, an enormous wind sprang up, so strong that the sailors were not quick enough to get down the sails. They had to cut one piece because the ship fell almost over to one side.

Then the fear came. We only could keep standing up in the between-deck; everything fell to one side, then to the opposite side. The waves were like tall mountains around the ship. The ship was very high because it was not heavily loaded, but the water washed over the ship so those being on the deck got wet very often. During this storm one could see the might of God as it appeared before our eyes, that the ship had to go down and yet it went happy on. We went to the Divine Service and sang "A Mighty Fortress is our God". We prayed and asked for the Lord's assistance, and sang, and prayed again. This time everybody attended the service. The wind stayed on for about 24 hours. The 4th it was a little better, though the wind still blew. The sea was restless. July 5th it was very cold. The wind was good and strong and we sailed eight English miles in an hour. Toward evening it slowed down and on the 7th there was

no wind again. July 9th it was so cold that one had to be dressed as to the winter. The wind was very strong and the waves beat so high it often sprayed over the ship. On the 16th it became violent again. Our ship staggered so hard we were almost unable to stand up.

The fear came back again, that it would be as bad as it was on the third, but God prevented that it was not so bad. July 18th the wind had turned a little and it was a fair day. At noon when we had eaten, we had our service. During the sermon, a healthy baby girl was born, through the grace of God and His help. We all were very happy about it. The 19th was also a fair day but no wind. In the evening the ship almost stood still. We were up very late and gazed at the innumerable bright stars in the sky. On August 1st the wind was stronger. We sailed completely to the south. It was foggy and cold until noon, when we saw land in the north. Even those gloomy faces were laughing now. Almost everybody came up to the deck now. It looked to me like a desert. As much as we could understand from the sailors and the captain, it was supposed to be English North America. We saw, not far from the coast, two icebergs which had broken away from Greenland. They looked beautiful in one way, but real horrible in another.

On the 10th it was completely still and warm. In the evening a little bird, very tired, came to our ship. The joy was great, soon we had to come to land! On August 15 the wind was the same. Everybody looked out and longed for land. Around 9:00 AM we saw two ships. They came closer. The happy message came; the pilot is on board! Then everybody was full of joy; now we will come to land soon. On the 16th it was very warm. At 11:15 AM they said: Land, Land, Land! The joy was very great. At 8:15 we were in the harbor and had cast the anchor.

The 19th we unloaded and our belongings inspected. Then we rode on a little boat to the city of New York. How the people rushed us with force! They wanted to take our things on wagons and bring it to the tugboat. But we were seriously against it. So Mr. Wolf let come a little steamboat, bringing us there. The 21st they made a contract to Buffalo; first on a tugboat at 6:00 PM to Albany; from there with the railroad to Buffalo. The 22nd it was very stormy with cold rain. We came through a beautiful country, at both sides large rocks, with little homes that stood in the gulf. But the rain pitched from the front toward us, that we and our belongings became very wet, mostly the beddings got spoiled. On August 23 we were in Albany. We unloaded and loaded again in the railroad. We left at 1:00 PM to head west.

So on the 25th of August, 1843, at 11:30 AM, we came here to Buffalo.

Source: "The Otto Family of Talheim", at the Family History Library

Between 1680-1710, immigrants were mostly small congregations lead by their minister to seek religious freedom and relief from the misery caused by numerous wars, disease, pestilence and famine. By 1755, at least 95,000 German settlers had arrived. But passage to America was expensive. Two main methods of making passage money aided those who could not afford the trip. One was to receive money from relatives who had already gone to America. The other way was called the Redemptioner method. The ship captains began offering passage in exchange for labor, to be paid at the end of the voyage. The person had to give from 4 to 7 years labor in exchange. These indentured servants were to be taught a trade and at the end of their service, provided with a suit of clothes. Upon arrival in America, ship's captains marched their passengers to the village square and sold their services.

New York's harbor was large, deep and easily accessed. Immigrants could travel up the Hudson River and then west along the Mohawk River, but the Iroquois nation blocked the western part of this trail until after the Revolutionary War when they signed peace treaties. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1824 changed the travel routes and gave the immigrants a cheap and easy way to travel to Western New York and beyond, by way of the Great Lakes.

"AN ATLAS OF GERMAN MIGRATION AND AMERICA" by Carrie Eldridge, 2002

"Generally, all but the wealthiest passengers traveled in steerage, the deck or decks between the cargo hold and the main deck. The ship's sides were lined with wooden bunks, about six feet long and two or three wide, for sleeping. Each bunk would hold several adults or more children. The space between bunks was crowded with baggage, supplies, cooking facilities, and, less likely, tables. Toilet facilities, usually too few, were placed along the sides, between bunks. There were no separate accommodations for female passengers. Everyone was mixed together. Passengers were allowed up on deck, but only in good weather, otherwise they were confined to the crowded conditions of steerage. Even in the best conditions this would be a difficult trip and often seasickness and lack of sanitary conditions made the trip a horrible experience."

Warren Zahler, www.zahlerweb.info/am/zebler/journey.htm

EARLY SHELDON IMMIGRANTS

Sheldon's first pioneer settlers began to arrive in 1804, and in less than 50 years, the land was cleared and the forest was replaced by farms, roads, stores, taverns, churches and schools. Many of the original land owners continued to move westward, as more land became available.

At the same time those families were leaving, immigrants were beginning to pour into this country from Europe. Most of the new settlers in Sheldon came from Germany. In the 1800's Germany did not exist as a country as it is today; it had been fought over for so many years, and its borders were always changing. Farms that had once been passed down for generations were running short of land as their families grew. Shortage of land and food forced people to think of moving away and thousands of Germans left their homeland and immigrated to America in the mid 1800's. Conditions had to be grim, for them to leave their homes and families and set out on the ocean to a new country, knowing they would never see them again.

Another factor was the strict German marriage laws of the time, which had been passed to limit

population growth in the lower classes. This led to more out-of-wedlock births and an increase in emigration. The prospective couple had to submit proof of property and employment income sufficient to guarantee that they would not need public assistance in the future. A 1722 law in Wuerttemberg specified the minimum age for marriage as 25 for men and 22 for women.

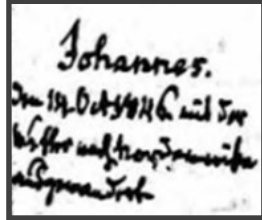
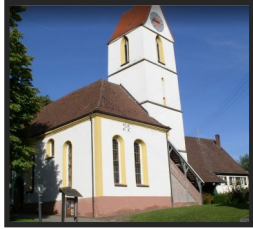
Travel was not easy. Those who came from rural areas would have had to take the railroad from their small country towns, unless they lived near a river. They needed to reach ports like Hamburg, Germany, Le Havre in France, or cross the English Channel to England to board ships bound for America. Sailing schedules were not exact, so the travelers would spend a few days at the port waiting. They would have to purchase supplies, food and other items for the voyage. Food was often the responsibility of passengers, while the shipping company supplied water and cooking facilities. They would have to be careful to avoid criminals who would try to cheat them or rob from them. The same was true upon their arrival in America.

(Continued on page 4)

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In the months to come, we hope to bring you some exciting stories about our Sheldon ancestors and their journeys to America. This is the story I know best. I hope it will inspire others to share the history of their families and how they arrived here.

THE JOURNEY FROM TALHEIM, 1846



“14 October 1846 – Left For North America.”
 The minister made this notation in the margin of the church record book next to the name of each person who left Talheim that day. Talheim is a village in Tuttlingen, Wurttemberg, Germany, about 70 miles north of Zurich, Switzerland. Wurttemberg is in the southern part of Germany, bordered by France on the west, and Austria on the east. Its population today is 1,224, but in the 1800’s, thousands of people left there for a new life in America.

At least 50 people from that congregation left together on October 14, 1846. That date has always troubled me, because it was so late in the year, which meant it would be winter by the time

they arrived in New York. Their departure must have been planned for some time, though, since the heads of the families had applied and received permission to emigrate. The Wuerttemberg, Germany Emigration Index shows Johannes Möst, 24, b.14 Dec 1822, from Talheim, having applied for emigration in September 1846, destination North America. He was accompanied by his mother, Ursula Kohler Möst, Widow, 47, b.01 Jan 1779; his wife, Anna Vosseler Möst, b.28 Sept 1824, and their year-old son, Johannes. Some of the other family names of those who left together were Irion, Glaser, Stroh, Leibring and Vosseler.

They would probably have gone by boat or steamship, heading north on the Neckar River to the Rhine, all the way to a port such as Rotterdam, on the English Channel. Then they would have taken another ship to Liverpool, England, where they boarded the ship Marmion, along with 250 Irish immigrants escaping the potato famine.

(Continued on page 5)



This map shows the location of Talheim and the area the travelers would have had to cover, just to reach Liverpool, England and board the Ship Marmion.

(Continued from page 4)

This journey by sailing ship would have been very similar to that of the Otto family, three years earlier, but it must not have taken as long. They would have been just as dependent on the wind, but perhaps it was better that time of year. The Ship Marmion arrived in New York Harbor on November 28, 1846. There was no official entry station like Ellis Island, but they would have docked in the same general area and have had to go through a screening process to make sure they weren't bringing in diseases.

From there they would have taken a smaller ship up the Hudson River to Albany. During most of the year they could have headed to WNY via the Erie Canal, but at that late date, the Canal would have been frozen, so they must have gone by railroad. Since there was no railroad directly to Sheldon, they may have gotten as far as Batavia or Attica, or gone on to Buffalo. But at some point they would have had to purchase a team of horses and a wagon to take them to Sheldon, unless they went by stagecoach.

By the time they reached Sheldon, it would have been the middle of December. I have always wondered, where did they stay, at that time of year? Often men would come on their own first to America and get a home built, then send for their families. But this church record and ship list indicates that the families were all traveling together. Perhaps they knew others from their family or town who had already immigrated, and had a place for them to stay until spring. Or maybe they were able to afford to stay in town for a few months until good weather. They might have stayed in Buffalo with the Ottos. I wonder what kind of Christmas they would have had. There are many details like this we will never know.

Although this large group left together, they didn't necessarily have the same destination. Some may have stayed in New York City or at any of the cities along the way. The families who came to Sheldon and stayed here were the Mösts, the Leibings and the Irions. Possibly recruiting agents came to Talheim, sold them tickets to America & arranged a final destination. Or they may have just come on their own. Most immigrants joined family already here.

But someone had to come first. Typically, they settled in clusters, as was the case in Sheldon, where many Catholic families had come from Germany and France in the 1830's and made their homes close to St. Cecilia's RC Church. The Lutheran families who came from Talheim in 1846 settled near St. John's Church, on Dutch Hollow Road. Whether anyone came from Talheim to Sheldon before 1846 is unknown, but several, including the Kohlers and Kreutters, arrived shortly thereafter.

Johannes Möst eventually went by the name John Mest. John & Anna Vosseler Mest had nine more children after arriving here; Susan, Christina, Margaretha, Barbara, Mathias, Anna, Mary, Rosa and George. They purchased a 50 acre farm on Big Tree Road. Anna died in childbirth at age 40, along with her 11th baby, "Anonymous", on April 17, 1865. All of their children but one relocated, to Wales Center, Stafford, Lockport, Pennsylvania and Michigan.

Their son John married Anna Zahler, who had also come here as a young child. They had six children; George, Jacob, Clara, Nettie, Nora and William, and lived at the corner of Big Tree and Dutch Hollow Road, where he was a tavern keeper and cattle hauler. His wife also died young, at 40, of consumption. Anna was buried near her parents & grandmother at St. Cecilia's RC Cemetery. John lived to be 76. He was buried on Goose Hill at St. John's Cemetery, along with his parents, grandmother & three of his children. Some people confuse John and Anna Vosseler Mest with John and Anna Zahler Mest, not realizing there were two families; father and son. I don't know how to change that, except to keep telling their story!



John Mest, 1845-1921

Submitted by Jeanne Mest. Note: My husband is a great, great grandson of John and Anna Vosseler Möst.

In an old scrapbook donated to the Town of Sheldon Historical Society there was a story about an old fashioned Christmas. The book belonged to someone from our town; the story related could be that of anyone in this area in the early 1900's. Sit back and reminisce about the true spirit of the Holidays.



Old Time Sleigh Bells Jingled Joyous Tidings

Fifteen miles was a long way, even in good sleighing.
By Blanche Watson

Uncle Griff and Aunt Phrone, short for Sophronia, lived only 15 miles away in another valley. The men were brothers and the women cousins. They were very close to Grandpa and Grandma but only saw each other once a year when the sleighing was good.

At that it was a journey of several hours, a cold, tedious one with spent horses at the end. They bundled against the cold in a straw-filled sleigh with a backless seat and the raw wind whipped their faces and cold crept into their bones. Even cowhide mittens could not keep the driver's hands from numbness and Uncle Griff's breath froze on his mustache.

Grandma held herself in readiness for these visits and the joyful reunion of kin was highly emotional. While they huddled around the kitchen range to get warm, Gramp hustled around with kindling and shavings to light a fire in the parlor chunk stove. In a house with seven bedrooms there were several guest rooms but the parlor bedroom with its big feather bed and all the fancy quilts would be warmer.

Meanwhile Grandma was flying around trying to talk and at the same time plan her meals. She had already put a corned beef brisket on to boil in her biggest kettle, which was plenty big. After it had boiled gently for hours she would add parsnips, potatoes, turnip chunks and quartered cabbage. This would be a boiled dinner along about 2 O'clock.

Reaching to the top shelf she took down cards of honey, later she would make hot biscuits to go with it. From her "deep freeze" she would remove a head-cheese, a roll of sausage seasoned with sage and a couple of mince pies. In the big milk chest used only in hot weather she stored things where they quick-froze and became the forerunner of today's home freezer.

Grandma's head cheese was a special treat. It was cooked meat made from small pieces cut from the

head, neck and hocks of a porker. It was gently simmered with spices, sage, salt, pepper and a bit of thyme. This meat had gelatinous consistency and when molded in a cheese cloth bag, ball shaped, it made a delicious cold meat for slicing.

Grandma put the pies in the warming oven to thaw. They were made with homemade mincemeat, boiled cider, fat, raisins, and spices; at the last she always dumped in last year's currant or crab-apple jelly and the leftover pickled pear juice. It made a rich but tangy pie.

As they all sat around drinking tea and trying to coax the numbness from toes and fingers, Grandma was trimming sweet apples and putting them in her largest round-bottomed kettle to boil. As soon as they were tender she would pour off most of the water and add maple syrup, a little cinnamon and a tablespoon of vinegar. In this thickening liquid they would glaze and absorb the delectable mixture over a slow fire. The molasses cookie crock was full and there were five loaves of fresh bread.

So many stories to tell: The well-being and activities of countless relatives, the exchange of ideas concerning farming which was always uppermost in their minds, and this time there was Uncle Griff's new mowing machine to talk about. Gramp was just a little envious; he still used a scythe and a cradle but he was strong and muscular, never had a sick day in his life, while Griff was a stocky man with asthmatic tendencies. So Grandpa was ashamed of his momentary envy and rejoiced over the new mower; such a timesaver.

The time would come when machinery would take over much heavy work, they thought, but it wouldn't happen in their time. They expected to bunch hay and pitch it and pitch it off again into the barn hay-mow. The same with everything else, but for their children they saw better things and easier living, not happier, but easier.

(Continued from page 6)

The house rocked with laughter and the togetherness of isolated people too long separate was a joyful thing.

It never occurred to them that their lives were hard and dull. They had land, buildings and stock. They had food and fuel, children to love and to love them and cherish them in their old age; what more was there?

The third morning Uncle sniffed the air and smelled snow in the wind; they must start home. Recipes were

quickly exchanged, pickle jars and geraniums carefully packed and the men had already exchanged seed corn. Tearful goodbyes were repeated over and over. The horses were rested, soap stones heated, a packet of lunch tucked in, and with a jingling of sleigh bells and shouted farewells, the beloved kin departed. It was a long way to go, 15 miles was, even with good sleighing.

Compiled by Mary Ann Metzger

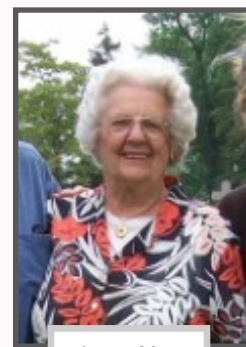
FROM ORANGEVILLE:

I would like to thank the Sheldon Historical Society for allowing me to set up a display to showcase Town of Orangeville history, as there is not a historical society within my Town. My Grandmother Mabel Spink was Town Historian for Orangeville for many years and always had a passion for genealogy research. She was also very active with the Sheldon Historical Society. I look forward to displaying the Town's history and sharing her work; I know she would be proud. Thank you again for allowing me this opportunity.

Laury Lakas, Orangeville Historian



Leona, 1920



Leona Meyer

Historian's Corner

HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY TO LEONA MEYER!

On January 2, 2020, Leona Meyer will be 100 years old! She was born in Sheldon, at Harris Corners, to parents William and Anna Strobl Mest, the fourth of seven children who began to arrive in 1917 with the birth of twin girls, Helen Mest Becker and Anna Mest Barvian. Older brother John Mest was followed by Leona in January 1920. Next came Marion Mest Perl, William and George. She was baptized and married to Sylvester Meyer at St. Cecilia's. Leona worked for the Stone family at their store in downtown Buffalo, Par Avion, for about 35 years, occasionally traveling to NYC on buying trips. Leona and Sylvester's lives were very full with an endless train of nieces and nephews from both sides of their families. They farmed and raised chickens, as many as 1,000 at a time. They enjoyed traveling, fishing trips to Canada, hunting, and making maple syrup.

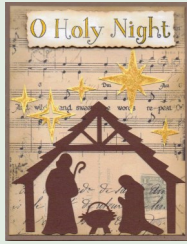
We thought she would live next door to us forever, but alas, one day she took a bad fall. While recovering, she realized that the time had come to let others to give back some of the help she had shared with people throughout her life. With no protest, she packed up her favorite furniture and belongings and moved to

The Manor House. It was a new adventure and not long before she was acquainted with everyone in her new "neighborhood". Now she is known as Aunt Leona to the staff and other guests, along with her family. When you visit her, it is always fun, because she can recall everything, and tell you stories about everything for the last 100 years! She is up on all the current events in the world as well as back home in Harris Corners. We kid about not needing Facebook; all we need to do is call Aunt Leona to know what is going on. She continues to be an inspiration to me and to so many others. Take a look at the special men and women in your lives, and listen to their stories now, while you can, so you will be able to pass them on to the next generation.

Receiving mail brightens her days so much. Please think of her when you send your Christmas cards, and remember that special birthday on January 2, 2020, when she turns 100! Better yet, stop in to see her sometime, at The Manor House, 427 East Main St., Rm. 105, Batavia, NY 14020.

Thank you for reading our newsletter. Have a safe & healthy Christmas & New Year. Jeanne Mest, Sheldon Historian

Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum
3859 Main Street, PO Box 122
Strykersville, NY 14145



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Previous newsletters can be seen at <http://www.townofsheldon.com>
Museum open June to September, but assistance is available upon request. Call (585)457-9509, 457-3444, 457-3061 or (716) 474-3156. Email: sheldonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com or metzgermaryann@gmail.com
Newsletter compiled by Mary Ann Metzger and Jeanne Mest, with the help of many volunteers. Submissions welcome. Email or call (716) 474-3156 for information. Send articles & inquiries to: Jeanne Mest, 470 Route 20A, Strykersville, NY 14145

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Become a member of the Sheldon Historical Society and be part of preserving history. Dues and donations support the maintenance of our museum and historical artifacts. As a member you have voting privileges, and published newsletters are sent to you at no cost. Meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7 pm from March to October at the Sheldon Historical Schoolhouse Museum, 3859 Main St., Strykersville, NY.

If you are currently a member, thank you for your support. Please remember to renew yearly. The membership year runs from June through the following July.

The Schoolhouse Museum is open June through September on Tuesdays from 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm and the last Saturday of those months from 9:00-12:00.

Email: Sheldonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com

Phone: 585-457-9509 585-457-3444 585-457-3061 716-474-3156

Membership Application

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

_____ \$10.00 Single

_____ Renewal

_____ \$75.00 Lifetime

_____ Wish to make a gift to Society _____

Make Check Payable to: The Town of Sheldon Historical Society

Mail To: Donna Kirsch, Treasurer, 4458 Richardson Rd., Arcade, NY 14009