



Sheldon Schoolhouse
Museum

Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter



Legends and Lore

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

Summer of 2022 got off to a great start with our 31st Annual Town-wide Yard Sale! We are open now on Tuesdays from 1:00-4:00. You are welcome to stop in, see our museum and learn about local history.

We have just been notified by the Pomeroy Foundation that we have been chosen for two more of their historic signs! They will be placed at the Sheldon Schoolhouse and the Strykersville Pioneer Cemetery. Unlike their folklore sign, applying for their historic blue markers requires extensive research, with accurate details and irrefutable evidence of historic events that occurred at the site. Thank you, everyone who helped gather the information. Ray Barber, of the Java Historical Society, was a special source of information needed on his ancestor, Joseph Barber.

In June, we unveiled our LEGENDS AND LORE historic folklore sign. Thank you to the Sheldon Town Board and everyone who helped get the sign installed. Be sure to look for it when you are in town, at the corner of Route 78 and Marie Drive. Our sign was received from the [William G. Pomeroy Foundation](#), which provides fully funded grants for roadside markers and plaques. Markers help educate the public, encourage pride of place, and promote historic tourism, economically benefiting the communities in which they are placed. Grants cover the entire cost of a cast aluminum marker, pole and shipping. Since 2006, they have funded over 1,800 signs across the U.S.

The following appeared on the Pomeroy Facebook page: *"In 1810, Garret and Saloma Stryker set out with their eight children on a 200-mile trek to begin a better life. Saloma guided their oxen-pulled wagon to where Garret had purchased land in what's now Strykersville, NY. Upon their arrival, Saloma thrust her riding crop into the ground. From that mere stick, they say, grew the mighty Stryker Willow. The tree became a prominent landmark, and according to locals, it would always be the first to bud in spring and the last to shed leaves in autumn. While the tree was removed in the 1940s, it's said that a willow continues to sprout in that very location no matter how often it's cut out. Today, the story of the Stryker Willow lives on with a newly dedicated Legends & Lore marker."*



P.J. Almeter, Paul Rambino, Judie Coffee, Ed Logel, Mary Ann Bartz, Barbara Logel, Laury Lakas, Steve Lakas, Jeanne Mest, Brian Becker, Jeanette Mejak, Joseph Meyer, Kate Meyer, Amy Meyer, Mary Ann Metzger and Donna Kirsch.

MEMORIES OF 4-H

By Jeanne Mest

After hearing the theme of the Wyoming County Fair, Saluting a Century of 4-H, it brought back memories to some of us at the historical society and reminded me of some interesting stories I have heard about 4-H. The first thing I thought of was an old movie I had recently watched on TCM, *The Green Promise*. Natalie Wood played Susan Matthews, a little girl who wanted so badly to join the 4H group and raise some baby lambs. Raised by her strict widowed father, she had never been able to do anything away from the farm, much less join a club. It meant so much to her. In one scene, she is sitting in her bedroom crying as she looks through the 4H club advertisement and then tears it up. When she does get to join, her joy just spills over as she recites the 4-H Pledge.



Natalie Wood, in *The Green Promise*, 1949

4-H Pledge

**I pledge my head to clearer thinking
My heart to greater loyalty
My hands to larger service
And my health to better living
For my club, my community, my
country and my world.**

It seems like everyone knows about 4H and has a story. What is now 4-H began in the early 1900s, when youth agriculture clubs appeared in different parts of the country. They were organized in rural schools or by agriculture colleges to bring the latest scientific information to farmers and their families.

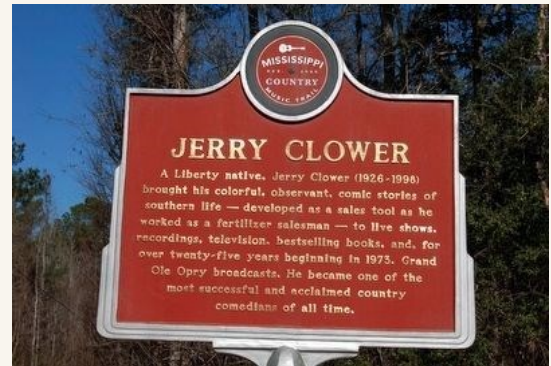
The 4-H motto is "To make the best better." The four H's stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. The national 4-H emblem, since 1911, is a green four-leaf clover with the letter "H" on each leaf. Green and white are the 4-H colors. Green symbolizes springtime, life and youth, while white stands for high ideals.

Comedian Jerry Clower was also passionate about 4H. Born in Liberty, Mississippi, he had grown up dirt poor. His 4H leader took an interest in the fatherless boy and made a huge impact on his life. He made it his life goal to become a 4H club agent, "To be like Mr. Mac and influence young boys like he influenced me." After returning home from serving in WWII, he learned that in order to be a 4H agent, he would need a college degree in agriculture. So he applied to Mississippi State University and made the football team. He had never even seen a football!

His first job after college was as a county agent, until he became a fertilizer salesman and began to entertain at their conventions with his hilarious stories. He was discovered after someone recorded him and sent the tape to MCA Records, who later awarded him with a platinum record for sales in excess of \$1 million, for his recording of "A Coon Hunt".

The inscription on a Mississippi Historical Marker reads:

"A Liberty native, Jerry Clower (1926-1998) brought his colorful, observant, comic stories of southern life - developed as a sales tool as he worked as a fertilizer salesman - to live shows, recordings, television, bestselling books, and, for over twenty-five years beginning in 1973, Grand Ole Opry broadcasts. He became one of the most successful and acclaimed country comedians of all time."



One of our members told about belonging to 4-H in the 1950's and having a special leader, Dorotha Kirsch, teacher at School #10. Dorotha took their group camping at Letchworth Park. This young lady's first memory was of hating to learn the blanket stitch. But she recalled playing the piano in a 4H talent show and can still remember the music she played. She became a 4H leader herself, and her children also grew up to lead 4H Clubs! What a legacy.

Dorotha Kirsch mentioned in her autobiography that 4-H was an important part of her life. *"What I learned about cooking, sewing, etc., I learned in 4H. We organized a girls 4H club in the Spring of 1929. We learned how to conduct a business meeting and everyone had to make a dress. I learned to run a sewing machine - bought a cotton print at Kreutter's Store, cut my own pattern. It all cost something like 87 cents. We had a card party and raised money to hire a bus to take us the rally in Warsaw. Our group was Marion Bardo, Marian and Lucille George, Catherine Fugle, Elzina Metz, Esther & Shirley Kohel. From then on through High School the 4H was the basis of my social life. We decided to raise money so we could go to 4H Field Days at Cornell; we paid \$4 for transportation and could stay in the dormitories for free. In the summer of 1932, I won a trip to the State Fair. We girls served Mrs. Roosevelt tea and welcomed Gov. Roosevelt with a song."*

In the 1960's, my own 4H experience was short-lived, but like Dorotha, I learned to sew and cook, from the best. My favorite memory of 4H was learning to bake bread. I was the kid that no one picked, so my leader, Mrs. Stresing, took me as her partner and was so kind to me, I ended up learning much more than the others. Granted, my kids ate more Rich's frozen bread dough than home-made, but I learned to do it the right way. I still love the feel of bread dough when you are kneading it. 4H came full circle for me as well, when my daughters joined Holly Kirsch's 4H group and created their own sewing baskets. Those little tools and notions still come in handy.

Today's 4H Clubs offer an abundance of skills and hobbies, from the basics to animal care, dog obedience, crafts, and even genealogy. I hope you can make it to the Wyoming Co. Fair and see.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 14 – SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 2021 - PIKE FAIRGROUNDS

"The Wyoming County Fair Salutes a Century of 4-H"

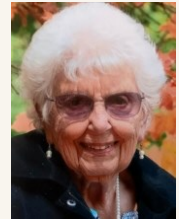


FROM THE SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM
AND HISTORIAN, JEANNE MEST

I would like to thank Heidi McCluskey for her interesting article on vintage photography. Hopefully reading it will encourage others to submit an article.

Thank you to everyone who updated or sent donations.

Welcome to all our new members: Laura Constable, Carl Mest, Drew & Marie Tidwell, Mary Conrad, Kate Meyer, Kathy Granger Kowalski and Holly Kirsch. New Lifetime Members are: Renee Reisdorf, Cheryl Rupe, Judy Carlson, Michelle Fontaine, Janet Hobin, and Linda Heinrich. Douglas Kilian, Mark Laufer and Ed Donnelly changed theirs from Annual to Lifetime. Sadly, we have lost a few members: Leona Meyer, Virginia Metzger, Norma Kelper and Grace Daniel.



Norma Kelper

Norma Geer Kelper was 94 when she passed away Dec. 10, 2021. She is greatly missed by her family and friends. Norma was the organist at St. John's U.C.C and a very active volunteer throughout her life, including being a 4H leader who taught many local girls how to knit.

Pioneer Cemetery Update: Two more soldiers from the War of 1812 have been discovered; Israel Geer and Welcome Moore, great grandfather of Esther Moore Kopp. That means there are ten soldiers, five from the Revolutionary War and five from the War of 1812, buried in our Strykersville Pioneer Cemetery! Our new sign from the Pomeroy Foundation will help us share their stories, along with those of our earliest town settlers. Thanks to a few volunteers, cleanup of the cemetery was attempted, but it needs a lot more attention before it will show respect to those early settlers and patriots. The town board has no extra funds at this time for the cemetery. So we need to find volunteers to help remove some dead, possibly dangerous branches and do some trimming. We hope to get a work group together soon. Thanks to a generous neighbor who loaned a bench, there is the beginning of a nice spot where visitors could sit and reflect. He has also planted some flowers there in the past. Hopefully we have some more people with community spirit who will help, as well. Thank you!

Generous Donations Received:

From Frank & Betty Reisdorf in Memory of Leona Meyer
From Ed Donnelly in Memory of Norma Donnelly
We also received donations from Marge Long, Janet Palmateer,
Drew & Marie Tidwell, Dan Almeter and Laura Constable.

Memorials and other Donations to the Sheldon Historical Society can be sent to:
Donna Kirsch, 4458 Richardson Rd., Arcade, NY 14009



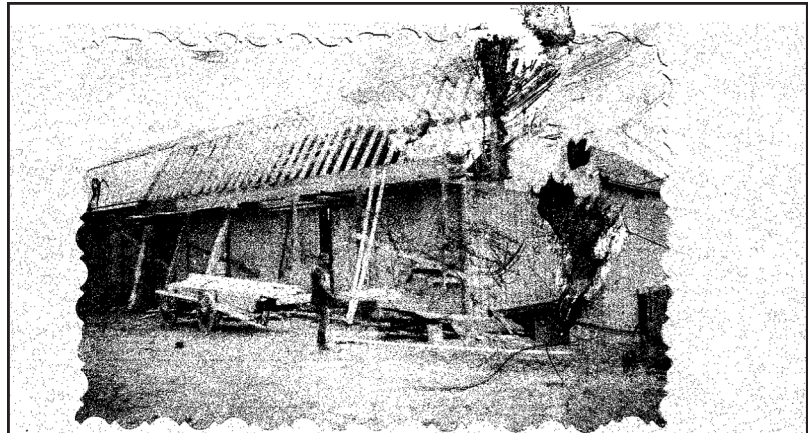
John Bert and Anna Meyer Almeter

Correction:

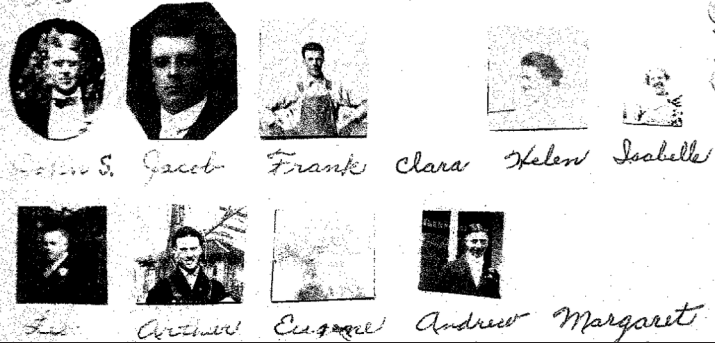
The photo of John Bert and Anna Meyer Almeter in our last issue was incorrectly labeled when I found it in an online tree.

Thanks to Dan Almeter, I was able to identify the correct photo of the couple, shown here. The moral of the story is, don't believe everything on ancestry.com!

The error turned out ok, though, because it brought Dan to the Schoolhouse Museum, where he let me scan his family history book as well as the book of obituaries which his mother kept up so faithfully over the years.



- Dan Almeter -
 John Bert Almeter was killed in a fall from his new barn roof at Cross's Crossing in the year 1904. He was 49 yrs old and left a wife Anna and 11 children - John 23, Jacob 22, Laura died in 1889-5 yrs old, Frank 18, Clara 17, Helen 15, Isabelle 13, Leo 11, Arthur 9, Eugene 7, Andrew 5, and Margaret 3 yrs old.
 John Bert is standing in the background of this picture.



(Photo of the barn where John Bert Almeter fell to his death, courtesy of Dan Almeter)

"If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would truly astound ourselves."

~ Thomas Edison

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO PAID DUES AND MADE DONATIONS SO WE COULD AWARD THESE SCHOLARSHIPS!



We had a nice surprise in June when Ava Linder, who had just been awarded one of our scholarships at Holland High School, came into the Schoolhouse Museum to meet us and thank the Sheldon Historical Society in person. Ava will be studying Adolescent Education at SUNY Geneseo. In her scholarship application, Margot Sovocool of Attica recalled growing up in Varysburg, attending Sheldon Elementary School. She plans to study architecture and historic preservation at the Univ. of Virginia. Merissa Ziekonski of Pioneer plans to begin her college career at Genesee Community College. It is an honor to be able to help these young people get a start as they further their education.

Upcoming Events:

Thursday, August 18, members of the Sheldon and the Java Historical Societies will be available at the Wyoming Co. Federation of Historical Societies booth at the Pike Fair. Come in and see the historic boxes from around the county. Java will also have a booth there, near the County Historian's.

There will be no Sheldon meeting in August. Our next meeting will be Thursday, Sept. 15, which will start with a picnic at 6:00 pm. The last meeting of the year for the Sheldon Historical Society will be October 20.



DID YOU HAVE
 YOUR HAIR CUT
 IN THIS CHAIR?

Be sure to add
 your comments
 when you come
 in!

Sheldon barber, Bill Metzger, created this unique barber chair, which is on display with his license from 1947.

"The Work of Our Hands" is a new display of handmade creations by our Sheldon ancestors. So far we have wood crafts, paintings, needlework, quilts, and song writing, and we plan to add more and keep changing this rotating display. See Barbara Logel if you would like to loan any items.



VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPHY

BY HEIDI MCCLUSKEY

My love affair with vintage photos began when I received a small bundle in the mail containing the image of my third great grandfather, Obadiah Snell. Taken in the early 1860's, it was taken shortly before he died. Now, I was on a quest to find more photos of my relatives. I started combing internet sites, older generations' collections, yearbooks, antique stores and garage sales for 19th century portraits. The search rapidly became overwhelming, so I took a step back to try and understand the emergence of Wyoming County photography. If my Sheldon ancestors, John Meyer and his wife Catharine Schunk, wanted to have their image preserved, where and what was available to them? Could they afford to have photos made?

To begin, here is a quick timeline of photo progression:

- Daguerreotypes** first started appearing in 1842. These were very expensive (roughly \$80-\$200 today) and very few people could afford them, because of this, they are hard to find.
- Ambrotypes** came into being in the early 1850's, could be hand tinted and were much more affordable (about \$6 today).
- Carte de Visite (CDV)** appeared in 1864. They were very popular and inexpensive compared to previous options. Sometimes these are found with a 3 cent tax stamp which was only charged during a specific time frame.
- Tintypes** began in 1870. Quicker and cheaper. Using this method, photographers claimed they could copy daguerreotypes for reproduction.
- Cabinet cards**: 1880s into the 20th century. This heavy card stock form is most commonly found and usually identified with the photographer's logo on the back or bottom front.
- Stereoview cards (SV)**: first made in the 1850's but most popular between 1870 - 1920. They were two pictures mounted in parallel viewing on a heavy card stock.

Next, who was working as a photographer in the Sheldon area?

Java Village:

The 1870-1871 Gazetteer and Business Directory for Wyoming County included two photographers working in Java Village; Ezra J. Cook and Chas. C. Hogan.

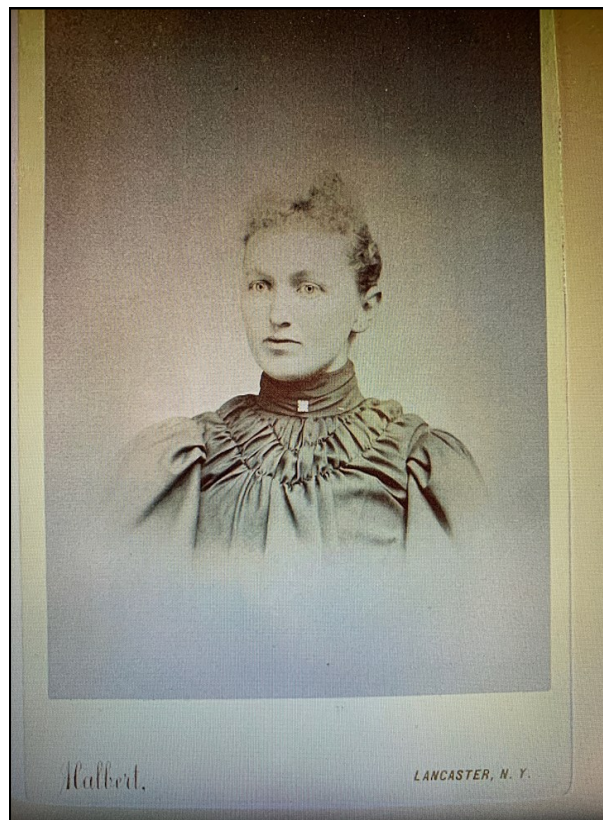
Ezra J. Cook was born about 1834 in NY. Sixteen year old Ezra worked as a laborer in 1850, lived in Holland, NY, but moved to Sardinia before the 1855 census. Possibly the son or grandson of L. Cook (owner of the General Store in early Holland). Even though he is identified as a photographer in the 1870-1871 Gazetteer, in July of 1870, Ezra Cook is enumerated as a photographer (born NY) living in Michigan. Along with his wife Jane, they move on to Iowa before

the 1880 census. Based on this information, Ezra Cook worked as a photographer, in Java Village, sometime between 1855 and when he shows up in Michigan in July, 1870.

Charles Hogan was born about 1848, the son of Patrick and Saphronia Hogan. A will was probated for Charles C. Hogan in May of 1880, listing a Henry Hogan as guardian for Charles' only child, a daughter named Violet. Violet was born about 1871. A good estimate of Hogan's photographic work would be between the years 1868- early 1880.

Strykersville:

H.H. (Herbert Henry) Halbert was born about 1855. He lived in Perry, NY for at least 5 years from 1875-1880 and married Hattie Bryant during that time period. By 1892, he was living in Lancaster, NY. Interestingly enough, Halbert was living near Nicholas George, his daughter Barbara and son Daniel, in the same 1892 census. Nicholas (1841-1927) was the son of Pierre/Peter George and Barbara Welter/Welcher. This connection may explain Halbert's appearance in the newspaper social columns referring to him in 1893 and 1894 as "from Lancaster" and in town (Strykersville) for a few days and 30 days, respectively. The photo below is an example of his work with the woman identified as Helen (George) Kirsch. Helen was born in 1872 and married Anthony Kirsch in 1897. She would have been 21 or 22 at the time of this photo.



Fred Leutenegger was born in Switzerland about 1843. In 1875, Fred lived in Colden, NY, the nephew of George and Katharine Mahle, as a boarder. He worked as a photographer in Strykersville, Holland, Java, Marilla and surrounding towns before he purchased a farm in South Wales around 1887. Per his obituary in the *Wyoming County Times* (WCT) on December 5, 1889, Fred committed suicide on the 28th of November. His house and barns on Hunter's Creek had recently burned. He left a wife and five children. Below is a sample of his work (sitter unknown):



Robert Wilson Pearson was born in Scotland in the year 1866. In 1892, he arrived in Arcade and went to work for C.E. Churchill as a photographer. Per his obituary, Robert purchased the Arcade photo gallery from Churchill in 1897 and started operating on his own. Business directories show a change in location to the Steele Foot Block building (on Liberty Street, Arcade) from June of 1899 forward. This address change was due to a substantial fire in December of 1898 that consumed multiple buildings. Immediately after the fire, the Pearson gallery was relocated to Delevan. He was also in Strykersville in May of 1899 until mid-June, setting up shop until the Steel Foot Block was completed. Robert (Bob) Pearson died in November of 1938 and is buried in the Arcade Rural Cemetery. This Pearson example is possibly Alice and Joe or George Clinch, children of John Clinch and Elizabeth George. It appears that the photo was taken for Alice's First Communion.

She was born in August of 1886 which would put the time frame for the photo right in the May/June 1899 period.

Varysburg:

J.E. Naylor was originally from Buffalo but settled in Varysburg to work as a photographer by October of 1891. By July of 1893, he appears to have moved to Warsaw as there are newspaper mentions of J.E. Naylor taking “quite a few nice portraits” of Warsaw residents. He also ran a large amount of ads for his Warsaw studio in the WCT from 1894 to July 1896. I could find no further mention of him in Wyoming County after the July 1896 date.



L.B. Scott was mentioned in 1913 in a poem by Franklin S. Noatman as the “Varysburg Editor’s son” who is employed photographing roads.

Goodrich House Gallery - Per the WCT on September 25, 1919; “A photograph gallery is being established in the Goodrich house. New full length windows are being put in and all necessary equipment for a first class gallery.” No further mention of this business could be found.

North Java:

Peter W. Welker, as of October 24, 1895, opened a gallery/was living in North Java in the Tuttle block and “...is doing fine work and gaining many friends.” per the WCT. In March of 1896, he was offering half off cabinet cards for thirty days and in April, was taking interior shots of St. Nicholas church.

The WCT of April 30, 1896, under the “North Java” heading, reported that “Photographer Welker has moved to Silver Springs.” Under the same heading, on the same day, the newspaper stated

that photographer Welker had taken a group photo of eighty people at the school that week. It appears that Welker was living in North Java but “moved” his business to Silver Lake in the summer months because on November 18, 1896, the *Wyoming County Herald* reported that Welker had reopened his studio in the Tuttle block. In April of 1897, he was advertising his price at \$.99 a dozen for cabinet cards.

Welker earned even more friends when, “Fire broke out in the Tuttle block store house occupied by C.W. Davis early Monday morning and only for the discovery and prompt action of photographer P.W. Welker, who has a gallery and living rooms in the upper story, who gave the alarm, a serious conflagration that most certainly wiped out a great portion of our village would have occurred. As it was stopped in time, only slight damage was the result.” WCT, Apr. 8, 1897

Charles E. Mason and William J. Schwab “...have a photograph gallery on West Buffalo Street. They are ready to take your picture on a moments notice. Please call and examine their work “per a June 5th, 1907 North Java social blurb in the WCT. Charles E. Mason was born in June of 1880, the son of John and Mary Mason. In the 1900 census, he is listed as being a clerk. In 1910, he was a merchant in the hardware business and lived on Poplar Tree Road, Java. William J. Schwab was born in May of 1880, the son of Fred and Jennie Schwab. William followed the same path as Charles, listed as a clerk in 1900 and a general store merchant in 1910. A good time frame estimate for their photography work would be 1907-1909.

John L. Garrett:

Stereoview photos

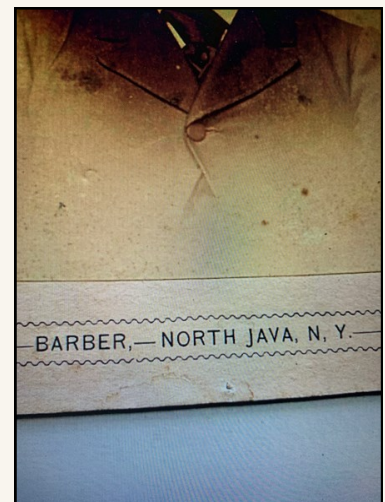
H.H. Halbert: see Strykersville

Barber:

There are many Barbers in the area but I was unable to identify which person was the photographer. Most likely a short lived business in the 1860's or 1870's.

Java:

Alonzo Lane was born about 1839 in Massachusetts. A 21 year old Alonzo lived in the household of Samuel Foote of Wethersfield, in the 1860 census. In the 1880 business directory for Wyoming County, Alonzo was listed as a dentist and a photographer. This explains why in later years, he is referred to as “Doctor”. He married Emery Estella Merville in Pike, NY in 1893 and opened a photograph studio in Warsaw in August of 1895. Alonzo died in Pike in March of 1918 and is buried there.



If you have a box of old photos, please consider sharing them - either with the town or county historical society or online on a genealogy website.

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

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Research assistance is available
throughout the year.

For inquiries please contact Jeanne Mest, Town Historian, email: townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com, 716-474-3156 or mail: 470 Rt. 20A, Strykersville, NY 14145.

Newsletter compiled and edited by Jeanne Mest, with the assistance of creator/consultant Mary Ann Metzger, Scott Barvian and many volunteers. Submissions welcome; please send articles or any questions to Historian. Newsletters can be emailed. Large print versions are available. For previous newsletters, see <http://www.townofsheldon.com> or Facebook: History of the Town of Sheldon, NY.

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laurylakas@gmail.com
Town of Sheldon Historian and Newsletter Editor - Jeanne Mest
townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com

Sheldon Historical Society Membership

Being a member of the Sheldon Historical Society means being part of preserving history. Dues and donations support the maintenance of our museum and historical artifacts. As a member you have voting privileges, and newsletters are sent to you at no cost.

The membership year is from July 1 through the following June 30. Current membership status is shown on your mailing label. Please remember to renew yearly, and let us know of any address changes. If you are currently a member, thank you for your support!

2022-2023 Membership Application or Renewal

Please send a check payable to the Sheldon Historical Society
To Donna Kirsch, Treasurer, 4458 Richardson Rd., Arcade, NY 14009

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

_____ New Member _____ Membership Renewal

_____ \$12 Annual Membership July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

_____ \$75 Lifetime Membership

_____ Would like to make a Donation In Memory/Honor of _____

_____ Complimentary - Current Members Only 80+