



Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum
3859 Main St.
Strykersville, NY 14145

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"

Happy New Year! We would like to thank the Almeter Tree Farm and the Java Strykersville Kiwanis for the beautiful Christmas Tree. It made our Schoolhouse Museum and our town look very festive! Currently we are open by appointment only but we are available all year to answer inquiries. Please contact us at: townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com or call (585)457-3061 or (716-474-3156).



Anniversary Cake

ST. CECILIA'S 175TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

By Jeanne Mest

On Nov. 5, 2023, history was made again at St. Cecilia's, at the celebration for the 175th Anniversary of the Church. Bishop Fisher said the Mass and over 270 guests attended. Weber Hall was decorated with photos and memorabilia from the church's long history. The Sheldon Historical Society was invited to unveil the historic roadside marker we received through a grant from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation. This marker joins others we have received from the Pomeroy Foundation. In Strykersville, a sign honors early settlers at the Pioneer Cemetery, and on Main Street there is a marker at the Schoolhouse Museum and a Legends & Lore sign for the Stryker Willow Tree. The applications for these signs are only accepted from February to March, so it is time to apply now. I would like to know if anyone has ideas or suggestions for a place you think deserves a historic marker. This grant program honors historic people, places and things and the information must be completely accurate.



FROM THE SHELDON SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM AND HISTORIAN, JEANNE MEST

We have a lot of excitement coming up in 2024, beginning with our Spring Workshop March 6 for the Wyoming Co. Federation of Historical Societies, hosted by the Java Historical Society.

I would like to give a special thank you to Lucas Metz and the town highway crew for installing the pole for the Pomeroy marker at St. Cecilia's. We really appreciate your help with this and knowing it is done right.

Thank you to Marie (Alice) Hyman and Marie Cecile Tidwell for their Lifetime Memberships and we welcome a new member, retired teacher Joyce Thompson, who promises to do a historic program for us. Also to Dennis Daniel, who brought us several items from his parents' estate, and Judy Calmes, for donating some huge binders of George Family Genealogy, which were researched and created by Ruth Calmes.

Thank you to all those who continue to support us by sending in your membership dues and donations. It helps a lot with expenses, especially the newsletters and scholarships. Whenever you give a donation in honor or memory of someone, we will send a note to let the family know.

Last fall, when I was preparing and mailing the special edition of the newsletter, which had extra pages, I realized that we could mail a longer newsletter using the same stamp as the 2-ounce stamp we currently use, so we are trying this longer version. We do have some readers who prefer to receive their newsletter through email and if that is you, please let me know. Also, I would love to hear from you all, regarding what topics you would like to read about in our newsletter. Feel free to contact me by email or through our Facebook page or messenger.

In this newsletter, we have stories about a library formed right after the town opened; an unusual cave, the men and women of the First World War, with a list of Sheldon soldiers, our American Legion who honors them, a Horse Thief, a report on Belgian immigrants, early roads and the invitation to the Federation Spring Workshop on April 6, with speakers on genealogy, metal detecting/a time capsule and how to clean tombstones correctly, along with a delicious lunch.



*Thank you to the following who gave us generous donations:
Connie Luker, Valerie Tyson, Richard Ehrhardt and Bill & Terry Northcut.
Linda Almeter gave a generous donation in memory of David Daniel.*

Memberships, Memorials and Donations to the Sheldon
Historical Society may be sent to :
PO Box 122, Strykersville, NY 14145





EXCERPTS FROM THE SHELDON UNION LIBRARY

By Harry S. Douglass, "Among Sheldon Pioneers"
Historical Wyoming, July 1954

"That Sheldon was a cultural outpost is substantiated by the incorporation of the Sheldon Union Library, January 11, 1815, by Philo Welton, Rev. William Herrick, James Ward, Samuel Castle, Chauncey Ladd and John Fink. At a time when much of the country was still undeveloped, these men provided themselves with a circulating library which was probably centered at the hub of the town."

Further information was found in the July 1950 issue of Historical Wyoming, page 120. The founders must have kept the library going for at least 10 years, because a library certificate was filed in 1825 with the Genesee County Clerk which was found in the Harriet Calkins Collection of Sheldon historical material.

It states that a meeting of Trustees of the Social Library convened at the house of Joseph Stryker, in Sheldon, on the 24th day of December 1825, to elect their officers and adopt their by-laws.

The trustees were Reuben Lewis, Jesse Stoddard, Joseph Stryker, Ariel Watrus and William H. Warner. When the certificate was filed, Nov. 18, 1826, Ariel Watrus held the position of Librarian.

Some of the by-laws were: *"The trustees shall manage the pestilential concern of said Library Society, and shall attend to received books of the propriety from two till five o'clock in the afternoon of the first Friday in every month, examine all books and apropos the damages on all injuries done the books by the proprietors and keep an account of the same.*

Every proprietor shall have a right to draw from the Books of the Library one volume every month on the regular drawing day and if he or she does not return the same in three months thereafter, he or she shall pay of fine of 12 1/2 cents." Every library member was to pay 25 cents annually for the purpose of building up the books.

No known record exists of where the book collection was kept or the subsequent history of the Society. It began at the home of Joseph Stryker in Strykersville. Most likely it was located in either Sheldon Center or Strykersville. These men were so particular about their books. They really meant a lot to them so I have to believe they passed them on to someone. Has anyone ever heard about this collection?

Its "Sugarin Time"

By Marilyn Smithley

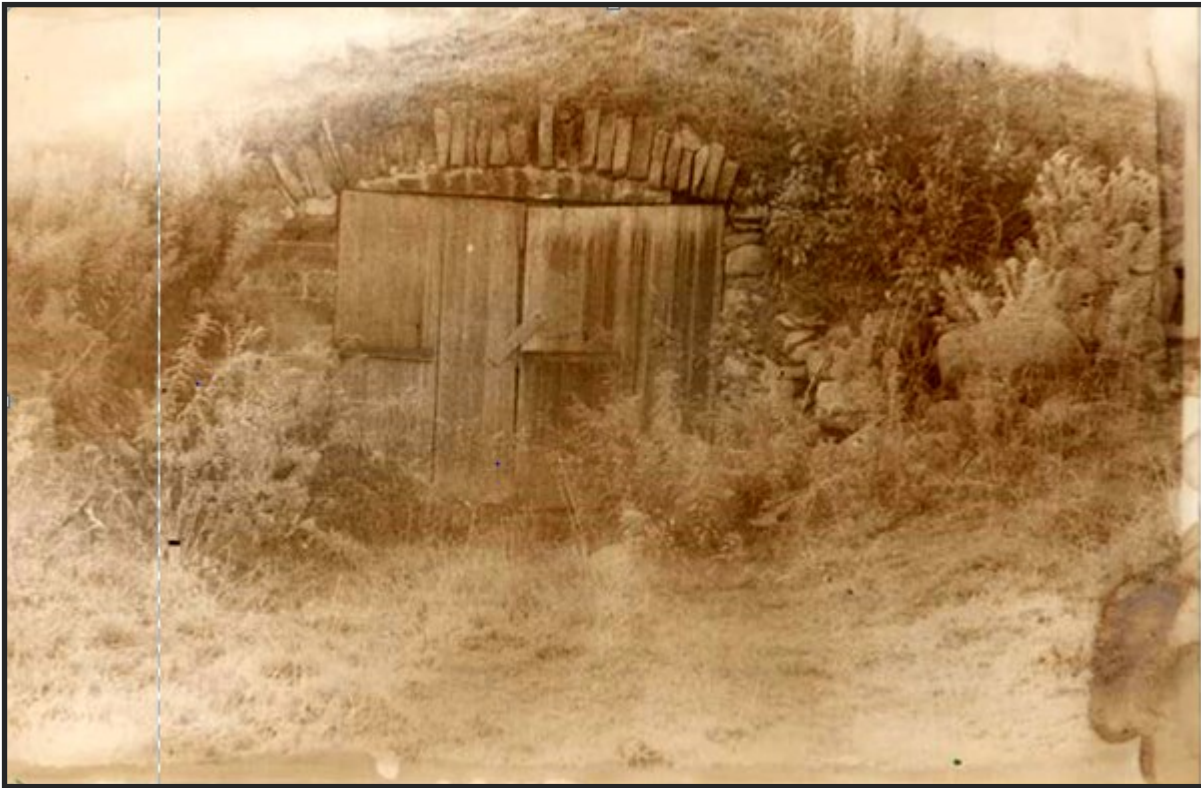
As winter turned to spring, the days got warmer and farmers were bustling to get the maple trees tapped. The pans were filled, a roaring fire built and soon the sweet steams from the boiling sap was pouring out of the open cupola on the roof. As Dad carefully watched the level of sap in the pans, as not to burn them, he also carefully tested the thickness of the syrup on the hydrometer. At exactly the correct thickness it was syruped off into a large pail, strained and ready to carry to the house. Mother canned it, ready to be sold or traded for groceries at Kreutter's Store or sold to Fisher Bros. Hardware in Java Village. She was sure to save some for the warm Johnny cake that she would bake for supper that night, making sugar cakes in the evening, and the family with forks in hand, pulling jackwax from a dishpan full of fresh snow.

Written for the Sheldon Bicentennial Cookbook in 2008 by R. Marilyn Smithley (1934-2018) who dedicated many years of her life to our Schoolhouse Museum.



THE BREWERY CELLAR

By Jeanne Mest

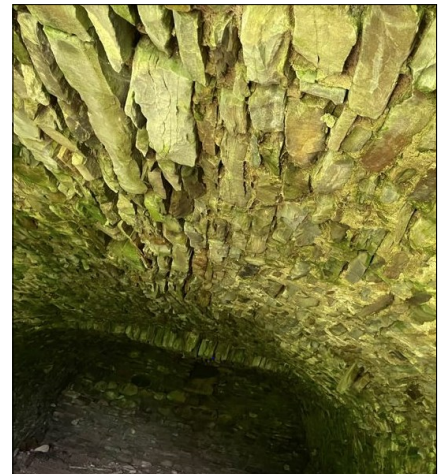


Ever since the day I turned on the office computer and saw this photo on the desktop, it has intrigued me. I learned this cellar was located in Sheldon, on the west side of Bartz Road. It is privately owned today but at some point in time, one of our more adventurous members managed to get a close look and took these other photos. He remembered when it was used in the 1950's to store barrels of cider and apples. At that time it was owned by Robert Armbrust and the ground above it was pasture land. The map of 1853 shows a brewery but not in 1866. It is said that at one time there was a hotel just south the brewery. An aerial view shows what





appears to be a great gaping hole in the ground, but there is no hole that you can see. It may just be that no grass is growing over the top of the cellar. There is a full ceiling and the interior arch is composed of flat field stone placed vertically with no mortar to secure it. You would not see this unless you were looking for it and maybe not even then. Many homes had root cellars back then, but the construction of this one is impressive as well as the fact it may have been built over 170 years ago.



WORLD WAR I - IN DEFENSE OF LIBERTY

By Jeanne Mest

In our two-room Schoolhouse Museum, one room is an authentic 1890 classroom and the other contains our research materials and as many historical displays as we can find room for. We usually keep them up for a year or two, and we are always looking for new ideas.

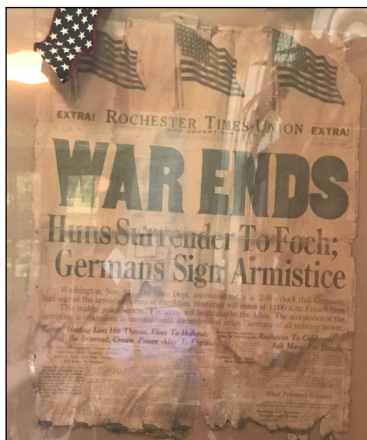
Last Spring, we got the idea for a WWI display, after receiving an old poster about the War's ending. We found some items to display and were loaned uniforms worn by Philip Merlau and Clarence Almeter. Gradually more items appeared, including a picture of Ivan Woods Richardson, some photo albums and a scrapbook from Hobart McCoy, Ceal's husband.



Display with bullets & pouch, leg warmers

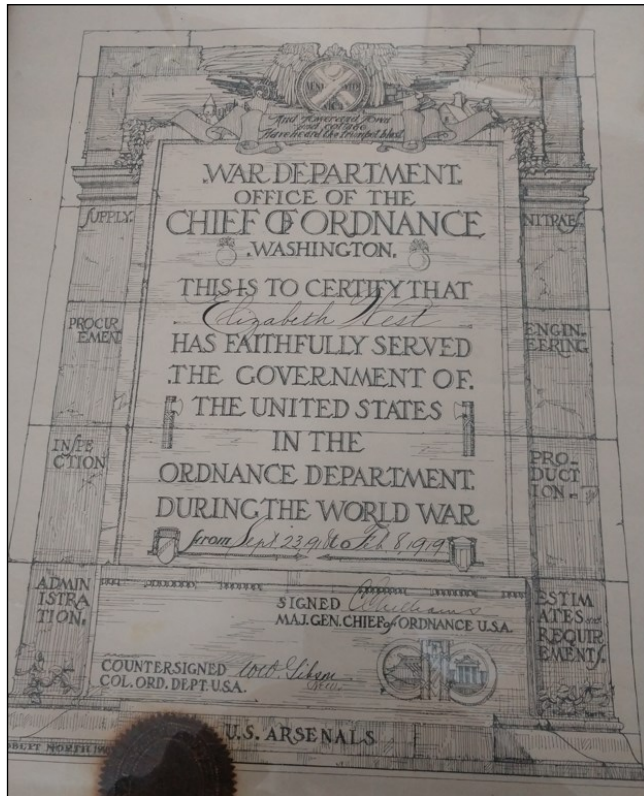
We are fortunate to have the Six Star American Legion Post nearby, which honors veterans from all wars, so that they are not forgotten. We have featured stories in our newsletters about the Legion and the six soldiers lost in WWI. (See May 2013, May 2015, Dec. 2018, April 2020, Aug. 2021 and Aug. 2023). In 2023, the American Legion held a special program on Veterans Day in memory of those soldiers at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, followed by a dedication to the soldiers the Six Stars Post is named after; local men who gave their lives during WWI. Families of Lawrence Kensinger, Andrew Dickes, Floyd Francis Dorsheid, John Musty, Thomas Roche and William Hendershott were invited to attend and were given a book created by Noelle Pitkin with photos and information on each.

When our museum reopens, we hope you will come in and see our displays and collections we have available for research.



Members of the Six Star Post and Auxiliary presenting a Veteran's Day Program

WOMEN ORDNANCE WORKERS IN WORLD WAR I



“ELIZABETH WEST HAS FAITHFULLY SERVED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE ORDNANCE DEPARTMENT DURING THE WORLD WAR, SEPT. 23, 1918 TO FEB. 8, 1919”

This certificate was given to us by a nearby historical society. None of us have been able to learn who Elizabeth West was, and we cannot tell from the wording what her job was. The US Government Ordnance Department is a branch of the armed forces dealing with the supply and storage of weapons, mounted guns, artillery and related equipment. Her job must have been connected to this in some way. It was interesting how they referred to “The World War”, not the First, as they believed it would be the only one, The Great War, The War to End All Wars.

The Munitionettes, or Canary Girls as they were known, were part of the female work force that took up war-time employment in the production of munitions during the First World War as the demand for munitions at the war front increased and the male work force was depleted. Munitions workers whose job was filling shells were prone to suffer from TNT poisoning. TNT stood for Trinitrotoluene – an explosive which turned the skin yellow of those who regularly came into contact with it.

In the course of learning more about the men of WWI, we also learned a great deal about the women who served in so many ways; as stenographers, clerks, radio operators, messengers, truck drivers, ordnance workers, mechanics and cryptographers.

(Continued on next page)

WOMEN IN WORLD WAR I

**Five million men were mobilized for service in the Great War.
Over nine million women mobilized themselves.**

The contributions made by American women in the First World War are largely overlooked, when the reality is that women played a crucial and defining role in America's victory. Without the efforts of women, tens of thousands of men, needed at the front, would have been tied to jobs and not available for wartime service. The success of America's military effort may have been in the balance.

Eight million women volunteered as **American Red Cross workers**, making surgical dressings, masks and gowns. The Red Cross also trained and provided nearly twenty thousand nurses to the **Army, Navy, and US Health Service**. They organized the **Motor Service**, almost entirely women drivers, most of whom owned their own vehicles and many were trained as auto mechanics. They provided transportation; they were motorcycle messengers.

Women were needed to work in **factories** to build aircraft and other materials for the war effort. Many of our mothers in Sheldon and Western NY were employed at **Curtiss Wright Aeroplane in Buffalo** in WWII but their mothers could have worked there in the First World War. (see pg. 10)

The **Salvation Army "Lassies"** served close to the battlefield, providing a variety of services to soldiers and sailors.

American's Librarians joined the war effort with 1,100 library workers at home and abroad, supplying books to American service members. Our nation's librarians erected 36 camp libraries and distributed nearly ten million books and magazines.

Seven thousand women applied as "**Hello Girls**", Switchboard operators working for the **US Army Signal Corps**. 223 were sent overseas, some very near the front lines. These patriotic women took the same oath of allegiance as soldiers, received the same pay and wore the insignia of the Signal Corps. Serving with distinction, seven of these women were awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. But upon their discharge, the 'Hello Girls' did not receive veteran's status or any benefits.

The **Army and Navy Nurse Corps** contributed 22,804 nurses to the war effort, serving at home, abroad, and on hospital and troop ships. Army nurses served at home as well as overseas; in France, Belgium, England, and even Siberia. Many were wounded and more than 200 died while in the Army and 36 women in the Navy Nurse Corps lost their lives. The service of these women often involved the supreme sacrifice. Leona Fromholzer of Strykersville served as an Army Nurse.

Tens of thousands of women joined the **Women's Land Army** to work the soil, fields, and orchards to free men for military service. Women took to the land and brought in the harvest during the war years to supply food to the nation, the military, and our allies.

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/women-in-world-war-i.htm>

WWI Wyoming County Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Town of Sheldon

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	ADDRESS	COMPANY
Almeter	Carl Anthony, Private	Strykersville	Co. D, 303D Engineers, A.E.F.
Almeter	Clarence M., Private	Strykersville	Co. C, 20th Engineers, A.E.F.
Brass	Albert Jacob, Private	Strykersville	Co. M, 307th Infantry
Bardo	Augustus J., Private	North Java	Co. I, 59th Pioneer Inf., A.E.F.
Batlo	John, Private	Strykersville	Co. 316, Neward Terminal
Bardo	Frank, Private	North Java	Co. 4, 152 Depot Brigade, A.E.F.
Glaser	Albert S., Private	Strykersville	Co. C, 345th Infantry, A.E.F.
Davis	Lucius, Corporal	Varysburg	Co. C., 11th Marines, A.E.F.
Donnelly	Charles, Private	Varysburg	38th Inf. Motor Mechanics Signal C., A.E.F.
Dellinger	Arthur E., Private	Strykersville	Detachment 116, Engineers APO 727
Durfee	Roy O., Private	Johnsonburg	Co. 153d Depot Brigade. Discharged
Dickes	Andrew A., Pvt. Bugler	Varysburg	Co. D307th Field Artillery, AEF, D. 3/30/1918
Eck	Glenn, Private	Varysburg	Co. 87, 335th Field, Artillery, A.E.F.
Fromholzer	Frank H., 1st Lieutenant	Strykersville	5th Battalion, 153 Depot Brigade
Fromholzer	Otto D., Private	Strykersville	9th Battalion, 153d Depot Brigade, A.E.F.
Fromholzer	Herman L., Private	Strykersville	Battery F., 104th Field Artillery
Franciemont	Edward John, Private	Varysburg	307th Field Artillery, Discharged
Fromholzer	Leona, Private	Strykersville	Nurse
Firestine	Joseph, 1st Lieutenant	Strykersville	311th Infantry, A.E.F.
Gregory	Veto J., Private	Johnsonburg	Co. D, 307th Field Artillery, A.E.F.
Glaser	Walter Peter, Private	Varysburg	Co. B, 307th Supply Train, A.E.F.
George	Cornelius J., Private	Strykersville	Headquarters Co. 78th Division
Glaser	Francis L.A., Private	Johnsonburg	Co. C, 302d Ammunition Train, A.E.F.
Haskins	Frank, Private		Co. M, 307th Division, A.E.F.
Jungers	Edward J., Private	Varysburg	Co. F, 347th Infantry, A.E.F.
Kibler	Julius G., Private	Johnsonburg	Co. 27, 7th Battalion 153 Depot Brigade
Kensinger	Lawrence Henry, Private	Strykersville	Co. A. 147th Infantry, 37th Div, KILLED
Keeme	Walter	Strykersville	Discharged
Kihm	Peter C., Private	Strykersville	
Lefort	Edwin Peter, Private	Strykersville	Co. F, 306th Infantry, A.E.F.
Laird	Leigh F., Private	Varysburg	Co. B, 144th Engineering Corps, A.E.F.
Metzger	Augustus A., Corporal	Strykersville	
Merlau	Philip Leonard, Private	Strykersville	312th Engineers Train, A.E.F.

(Continued on next page)

Musty	Edward Floyd, Private	Strykersville	Co. L, 345th Infantry, 87th Div., A.E.F.
McGowan	Joseph, Private	Strykersville	U.S.N.T. 62 Barracks
Obertean	Edward Charles	Strykersville	Military Police, Division 78
Richardson	Ivan Woods, Private	Strykersville	307th Infantry, A.E.F.
Smith	Harrington B., 2nd Lieutena	Johnsonburg	Co. F, 151st U.S. Infantry, Discharged
Sloand	Leo Jacob, Private	Strykersville	Co. E, 348th Infantry, 87th Division
Seeley	Gilbert C.	Varysburg	Vocational Mechanics Inst., Discharged
Smith	Roy M., Sergeant	Johnsonburg	Co.9,161 Depot Brig,Discharged12/13/1918
Shreder	Julius, Private	North Java	Co. C., 302 Supply Train, A.E.F.
Sillaway	Charles H., Private	Strykersville	4th Training Battalian
Sheehe	Frank, Corporal	Strykersville	Battery D., 307th Field Artillery
Tozier	Earl R., Private	Johnsonburg	Co. E, 348th Infantry, 87th Division
Vouaux	Alfred Eugene	Strykersville	Interpreter, 2d Army Corps, A.E.F.
Victor	Floyd Henry, Private	Strykersville	Co. D, 9th Battalion
Wolf	John G., Private	Varysburg	Co. 3, Discharged
Wolf	Harold G.	Varysburg	Co.384,Batt G, Paris Island SC, Discharged
Zumstein	Louis P., Private	Strykersville	Co. E, 302d Ammunition Train, A.E.F.
Zahler	Julius, Private	Johnsonburg	Co. 9, 1st Road Reg.

Pioneers of Aviation



On December 17, 1903, amid the dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, Wilbur and Orville Wright achieved one of civilized man's fondest dreams - flight. It lasted only twelve seconds, but that brief flight of a manned, heavier-than-air machine ushered in the age of aviation. Ironically, this milestone, which marked one of the greatest advancements in the history of man, was witnessed by only a handful of people and was largely overlooked by most newspapers of the day. We owe so much thanks and gratitude to Orville and Wilbur Wright, Glenn Curtiss, and the other early pioneers of aviation who took those first steps. But in 1905, when the Wright brothers offered their invention to the United States Army, it was rejected without any consideration. **So how did we go from that first flight in 1903 to flying airplanes in World War I just 15 years later?**

The Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company became the largest aircraft manufacturer in the world during World War I and went public in 1916 with Curtiss as president. Curtiss had become the world's largest aviation company, employing 18,000 at its **Buffalo facility** and 3,000 at its Hammondsport, New York location. They produced 10,000 aircraft during World War I, more than 100 in a single week.

<https://curtisswright.com/company/history/default.aspx>

THE HORSE THIEF THAT ALMOST GOT AWAY AND THE SHELDON FARMER WHO WOULD NOT GIVE UP

By Mary Ann Metzger

It was May 12 in the very early 1920's, when Nick J. Almeter and his wife Helen of North Road in Sheldon took a leisurely walk to visit their friends, Mr. & Mrs. Straub, who owned Straub's Hotel at the corner of North Sheldon and Bartz Roads. At this time the road was almost abandoned, a rutty path. It was a Holy Day, Ascension Thursday, and as a practicing Catholic he would have been exempt from the usual spring work of plowing and planting. There was a dance at the hotel and apparently the neighborhood had gathered to have a good time, as was the way of the country folk to work hard and relax. While sitting on the porch that day he noticed an unfamiliar man walking by. This was odd, because everyone knew each other, and their hired hands and probably their out-of-town visitors. So who was the strange man?

According to legend, they just shrugged it off as someone just passing through; not to worry. This hotel was the place where friends gathered to chat and at times to kick up their heels on the dance floor upstairs. Most likely, Mr. & Mrs. Almeter, after having a great evening in this hotel, proceeded home and retired as usual, never knowing that a man had been hiding in the weeds and perhaps watching their every move.

\$25.00 REWARD.

For the return of a dark cherry bay Gelding, 6 years old, weight about 1175, one left hind foot white, bears a cork mark on the outside right front quarter of foot. Also single harness, and a Milburn top buggy run about two years, and two blankets yellow pladdled. This horse was taken out of owners barn on Thursday night, May 12th between 12 and 1 o'clock.

N. J. Almeter,
Strykersville, N. Y.

Nick had a horse he treasured; a dark cherry bay Gelding with distinguishable markings, about six years old and weighing over 1100 lbs. The next morning he discovered the horse and buggy were gone. He made the rounds, asking everyone if they had seen it, and even posted a notice with a \$25 reward. He was a man well liked and the neighbors looked in vain with no luck. The talk at the corner hotel was about the stranger who had walked by that day. Could he have been the thief? Nick felt heartsick. They depended on horses in this era and throughout the summer season he could not get over the loss of this mare.



Nick Almeter posing proudly with his family and horses.

That Fall, friends told him there was a person in Holland claiming to have clairvoyant powers; what we would call ESP today, and that he should talk to this person. His wife was religious and horrified at the thought and forbid him to go. Against his better judgment and at the point of despair, he paid that person a visit. He was told that a man had hidden in the weeds near his home, watched his young children play that day, and had watched Nick closely. Then sometime in the night, this thief had broken into the back door of the barn and stolen the horse and

buggy before high-tailing it out of town. The psychic went on to say that the thief sold the horse and it was in a stable in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Finally, he had a ray of hope. It was around Thanksgiving, and Nick dropped everything and went to East Aurora to board a train to Erie. After arriving he went to authorities and was told there was a man in jail who was a horse thief. Nick visited the prisoner, a man by the name of Riggs, who told him the whole story. Nick described his horse and buggy and finding out who it was sold to, he went and sure enough, he spotted his horse and it reacted to its lost owner's presence. Nick was overjoyed and immediately headed for home.

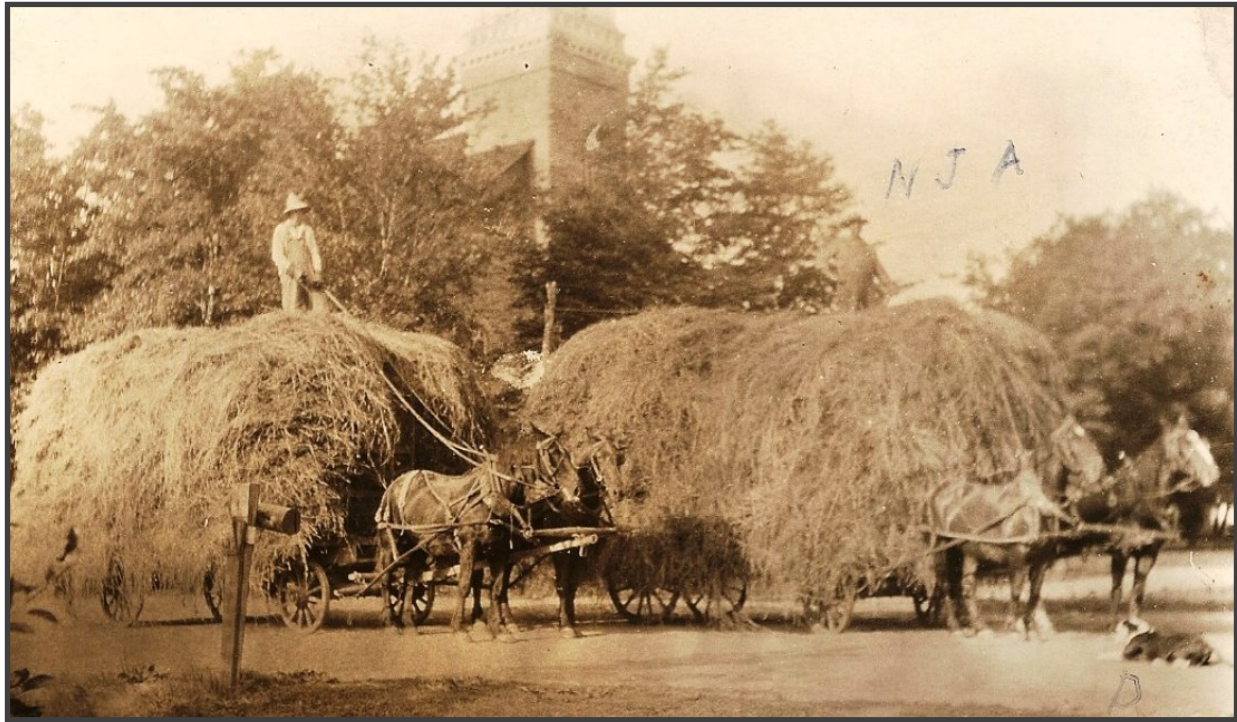
When he arrived in Silver Creek, though, an obstacle arose. There was a terrible snow storm and the buggy could not get through. He traded his buggy for a sled and again took off, confident that the horse knew the way and that soon he would be with his beloved Helen. The journey took about six days in all. Friends and neighbors welcomed him home as he arrived in Sheldon with the horse and sled. Apparently, Mrs. Almeter forgave him, as his family life returned to normal. She may have even had a plate of Thanksgiving waiting for him and perhaps there was a celebration at the corner hotel.

Horses were very valued and treasured into the early part of the 20th Century in Sheldon. The story spread far and wide, not to tamper with a Sheldon farmer's animals, as these dedicated people didn't give up easily. The legend of the lost horse and the fortune teller has been told throughout the generations, especially at Thanksgiving time.

***This story was written by Mary Ann Metzger, October 2010,
from the Archives of the Sheldon School House Museum.***



In 1930, the Almeters moved from North Sheldon Rd. to this home on Bartz Road, near the intersection of Centerline.



Nick Almeter and Leo Becker, with St. Cecilia's in the background.

Nicholas J. Almeter
 Nicholas J. Almeter, who was born son of Nicholas and Mary Catherine Gaunty Almeter in Sheldon, July 29, 1864, died at St. Jerome's Hospital, Batavia at 2:20 a. m. May 5, 1949 after being in declining health for about ten days. His home has always been in Sheldon where he was a farmer until retiring a few years ago. He was a member of St. Cecelia's Church. His wife, the former Helen Armbrust, died a number of years ago. • Funeral services were held for him from his son Clarence's home in Sheldon at 9:30 a. m. Monday and at 10 a. m. from St. Cecelia's church with burial in the church cemetery with Rev. George Koch, pastor of the church officiating. Besides the son mentioned, he is survived by two other sons, Paul and William, both of Sheldon; 3 daughters, Sister Mary Lillian of the St. Jerome's Hospital staff, Mrs Roy Calkins of Varysburg and Mrs. Henry Parr of Kenmore.

Farmers would back these giant loads of hay into the barn; actually the horses would back it in to the haymow. First the farmers had to pitch that hay onto the wagon, then they had to pitch it off in the haymow but thankfully they had a huge hook that came down from the ceiling of the barn, and it would pinch a bunch of hay, and they would raise it back up with a pulley and then pull it down along a rail to the other side of the barn where they would drop it and go back for more.

Attention High School Seniors

Soon it will be time to submit your applications for our Sheldon Historical Society Memorial Scholarship. All students who enjoy history are welcome to apply for the \$500 Scholarship which will be awarded to a senior at each school; Attica, Pioneer and Holland. Applications are in the guidance office or <https://www.sheldonhistoricalsociety.com>

Our Classified Columns bring you in touch with a buyer or seller. Others get results why not you.

Wyoming County Times

OF COMMUNITY SERVICE FOR OVER 50 YEARS

WARSAW, N. Y., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1924.

NUMBER THIRTY-EIGHT

Erie County Motorists To Visit Warsaw

Delegation To Stage Celebration Upon Opening New Varysburg Road

OLD HISTORIC HIGHWAY

Ancient Stage Route Developed Into Highway of Great Scenic and Commercial Value. Named From Indian Village

Motorists of Buffalo in recognition of the opening of the new Wales Center-Varysburg improved state highway which was given over to traffic on Monday of this week are planning a celebration of the event. The affair will consist of an automobile run from Buffalo to Warsaw and Dansville and return on Tuesday, September 23rd. The details of the run are being worked out by President William Lansill of the Buffalo Automobile Club and the several villages along the route covered by the new road are asked to co-operate.

Upon the arrival of the delegation in Warsaw it will be met by members of the Village Board, Warsaw Board of Trade and the Warsaw Automobile Club. It is expected that the Buffalo party will spend about a half hour here.

A demonstration of this character shows the high value that the people west of us place upon the completion and opening of this stretch of road which gives them a route into this section, shorter by several miles than any other. The new highway not only cuts off 20 miles from the old route to Warsaw but forms a new link in the Southern Tier route to New York, that cuts the motor car mileage from Lake Erie to the sea to approximately 400 miles, now the shortest of our trunk line routes to the metropolis.

Not only is this route of high commercial value but from a scenic standpoint it cannot be excelled by any in the state. A recent motorist who came over this road was so impressed by the beauties of the scenery that he made the statement that it was not necessary to visit Switzerland or other foreign countries to come in touch with the beauties of nature. He found it within a few miles of his own home.

The following news clippings and excerpts were found that pertain to Scott Barvian's article, "The Famous Buffalo Hill" in our April 2023 issue.

This road has played a valuable part in the early development of this section of Western New York. Turning back the pages of history one finds that this road, known for years as the Big Tree road, was one of the main arteries of travel from the eastern part of the state to the great lake regions. With the coming of the early pioneers and the development of this section, the demand soon arose for a suitable highway which could be traveled by the stage coaches of those days. The demand was met by the establishing and building a six rod road from the village of Canandaigua to the then small village of Buffalo. This road ran through the villages of Livonia, Geneseo and Leicester, entering the village of Warsaw at a point north, which now forms the northern line of the village corporation. Instead of following the present Perry Center road the route traversed a former one north, coming down the hill to join the present road across the valley, at a point between the property of Mrs. Patrick Higgins and that of Willard Barlow. To those who enjoy a climb over the hill, the road will reveal itself. Part has been obliterated while sections are still retained as a lane leading to pastures or fields. After crossing the valley the route was directly west until it reached the village of Varysburg, where it joined the road which is now improved. The old road on the west side of the valley leading up the hill has been abandoned for years and is unfit for travel at the end where it leaves the Wyoming street highway.

Along this stage route were taverns or halfway houses where the horses were changed or refreshed and where the passengers were cared for. Such a tavern was located at what is known as Sickley's Corners, standing for years on the south east corner of the cross roads. Age and the elements have razed this ancient landmark for all time. If its old walls could have told of the happenings under the roof of this structure, many would be the interesting facts of the early development of this region.

No better name could be given this beautiful stretch of improved highway than to retain its old name, Big Tree Road, which it has carried down through the past century. To those not familiar with the history of the Genesee country the name Big Tree does not signify much but as one delves into the past he finds that it is linked with the title to the land west of the Genesee River, with the exception of a few small reservations, which was transferred by Indians to the whites. This important event took place near the present village of Genesee which was known as Big Tree, which got its name from a mighty monarch of the woods standing on the bottom lands on the right bank of the Genesee River. The celebrated treaty was held within a few rods of this mighty oak and was known in after years as the Big Tree treaty. The tree gave its name to an Indian village in that section and an Indian chief (Go-non-do-wa-nah) also took his name from this tree. Later

the land upon which this tree stood became the property of General James S. Wadsworth and in 1857 when it was washed out and toppled into the river, its trunk was sawed into sections and hauled out. The tree was 22 feet in circumference five feet from the ground. Through the generosity of General Wadsworth the lower section was given to the Pioneer Association at Silver Lake where it stands today at the end of the famous log cabin.

From out of the Indian trails of yesterday have sprung the highways of today with the varied means of transportation from ox team to autos. The record of achievements of the past which are worthy of commemoration can be recalled in no better way than to let our magnificent highways carry the reminder. May the name Big Tree hold its place on this state highway in the years to come to remind one of the history of the past.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE ATTICA-VARYSBURG HIGHWAY

Early History of Attica and Varysburg Concerning Settlers and Highways—Cement Road Talked Of in January 1921—Work Started in the Fall of 1926

The first settlers in the vicinity of Varysburg, which is in the town of Sheldon, were Roswell Turner in 1804 and Elijah Warner who surveyed the town into farm lots, assisted by Roswell Turner, Joseph Sears and Tabor Earl. The first winter was one of great suffering and privation. Provisions were brought from Honeoye and the Genesee River on ox sleds. The journey took five days and in fording Oatka Creek, Mr. Turner froze his feet so badly, he had to be carried back to Honeoye on a sled.

Wild animals were abundant and the sheep had to be yarded at night. Bears, wolves and foxes ate up the poultry and stock. Deer were plentiful and the Indians used the hills and valleys of Wyoming for their hunting grounds long after the settlers came. Chauncey Loomis cut the road from Bennington through the Indian Reservation for the Holland Land Company and the first team presiding over it was a wagon drawn by 3 yoke of oxen going to Buffalo for salt. The journey took 3 days. Lester Brace, Joseph Farnum and Levi Street were the teamsters. The road from Bennington to Sheldon was cut in 1807 and was continued north to the south Buffalo road the next year. In 1808, a road was opened from Bennington to Attica. The general direction of all the roads was east and west or north and south, except where variations had to be made for swamps and hills. The "Old Buffalo Road" passed through Varysburg from Warsaw. On Jan. 28, 1921, the cement road from Attica to Varysburg was promised and booked to be ready in 3 years. Five years later the work actually started and in this issue of the Attica News, we are celebrating the official opening of a fine new thoroughfare connecting two villages over a hundred years old.

BELGIANS SETTLEMENTS IN NEW YORK AT THE TIME OF THE CIVIL WAR

SHELDON, WYOMING COUNTY

The Emigration Prior to 1840

In 1832, [the inhabitants In **Offen (Fouches)**]sent a certain Martin to evaluate the conditions for them. His report seemed favorable, and in 1833 two expeditions were readied and left the country. They consisted of 15 men from **Offen (Fouches)**, one from **Metzig (Messancy)** and one from **Selingen (Sélange)**. All were strong and willing to accept any kind of work. They knew how to plow and to wield a pick and shovel.

In 1834, seven men from **Soes (Sampont)** settled in **Stark County, Ohio**. Among them was *J.B. Noel*.

Many other emigrants left **Offen** in 1835 and 1836 and settled near **Sheldon, Wyoming County, New York**. Until the end of the forties, they were followed by other residents of **Offen** and by some from **Soes**. For their livelihood, the immigrants worked on the canals in New York State. At the time, they earned \$13 per month plus board. Farmers paid their hands \$8 to \$10 per month. In 1835, **J.B. Noel** had his family follow him from Europe and met them in Albany, N.Y. In 1838 he moved west and crossed the Mississippi. He was the first Luxembourger to settle permanently west of the great river, except, of course, for the Luxembourger missionaries who opened their missions in New Orleans in the preceding century. It seems, however, that in 1836, a resident in New Orleans who came from Nospelt, whose name could not be ascertained, had expressed his admiration for the Mississippi even before Noel. Noel settled a few miles south of Dubuque, where the family still (1889) resides. He was joined later by his two brothers, Franz, who farmed next to J.B. Noel's land, and Johann Franz, who, as captain of his own ship, later sailed up and down the great river. A ship's landing along the river now carries the name of J.F. Noel.

When New York City rose in prominence as the trade center of the country, it also became the port of entry for the immigrants. First Baltimore and then New Orleans lost their standing as the primary cities for new arrivals starting on their journey inland. The passage was quite expensive, costing more than 500 francs via New Orleans. Walloons did not emigrate in this decade. Also, the emigration from what after 1839 became the Grand Duchy was not considerable. The largest number of emigrants was from the Arlon region. We would not be too far off the actual figures if we estimated the emigration from the Grand Duchy to America during this decade to have numbered 200 people, with another 300 originating in the German-speaking part of the Belgian province of Luxembourg.

As was the case with all other pioneers in the backwoods of America, Luxembourgers had a difficult start. The supplies which they took with them were meager, their earnings small, and what they produced had to be sold cheaply. Their settlements were far from market places which, for a lack of roads, could be reached only by forest paths. The settlers were happy when the Indians left them in peace, and when they were able to purchase 80 acres as land came on the market. High interest rates were charged for loans, and mort-gage costs forced some to lose house and farm. People counted themselves truly lucky when they met with a priest who lifted their spirits, encouraged them, consoled them and brought them the healing power of faith, despite the

almost total lack of structures in which to hold services.

Source: Nicholas Gonner; Luxembourgers in the New World

26 August 1833: Arrival of the Jean Nicholas Noel family

August 26, 1833, New York

The British ship *Samuel Cunard* arrives in New York on this Monday, August 26, 1833 from Shields, England. There are 40 passengers on board identified as from Belgium. These include the family of Jean Nicholas NOEL, age 49 and spouse Catherine, née KLEIN, age 50; traveling with their sons Antony / Antoine, age 15; Francis / François, age 11; John / Jean, age 7; Joseph, age 20 and daughters Annette, age 25 and Catherine, age 18.

Their son, Jean Baptiste NOEL, listed as Jno Noel, had arrived in New York on September 2, 1832, aboard the ship *Illinois* from Le Havre, France, listed among nineteen passengers recorded as from Belgium. The other passengers listed as from Belgium bear the following names ANCIAUX, GAUCHE, SCHNELL, SCHOLTES and SIMON.

Jean Baptiste NOEL was born on February 8, 1811, in Sampont (Lëtzebuergesch: Soes), a hamlet belonging to the municipality of Hachy, now Kingdom of Belgium, formerly Luxembourg territory until 1839. He settled in Albany, New York and moved west three years later. In 1838, Jean/John Baptist NOEL is the first white settler south of Dubuque, Iowa, establishing himself in the Mosalem area.

In the spring of 1846 Peter GEHLEN and Charles HOFFMANN from Olm, Luxembourg, coming from New Orleans and St. Louis, unexpectedly meet the NOEL family. They settle close-by on the Tête des Morts River, founding the village of St. Donatus, Jackson County, Iowa.

Source: <http://luxembourgensia.blogspot.be/2013/08/26-august-1833-arrival-of-jean-nicholas.html>

Report made in 1855 by Mr. H. W Malli, Belgian Consul in New York, and addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, on emigration to the United States.

Sheldon is a rural township as a whole, established on land now almost entirely cleared, in one of the most fertile regions of the Union, 10 leagues from Buffalo, a town of 60,000 souls, on Lake Erie, which follows the same progression than Chicago on Michigan.

The climate of Sheldon is about the same as that of Luxembourg. The terrain is hilly: it flow of springs that provide very good water. Part of the soil is gravelly, deep, excellent for cereal; another is clay and less good than the first. Most of the land is in the state of natural grassland. Cattle breeding is the main resource of the country. The products are sold at the Buffalo market. The acre of land, sold 10 years ago, 2 to 3 dollars wooded and 7 cleared, is worth now 15 to 20, and in 10 years will be worth 30 to 35. It want 30, 40 and 50 acres for establishing a farm.

I have not been able, despite repeated representations, to obtain precise information on Sheldon's population and its main elements. Here are some details that will give an idea. There are a hundred Belgian families, most Walloons; twenty French families, few Americans, and Germans in predominant numbers. There are 4 stores of all kinds of objects (which used to include in Europe grocery, haberdashery, hardware), which are coming from New York. There are established two butchers, both Germans; two German brewers whose industry is now held in check by the enactment of the Maine law, or the prohibitive law of the beverage trade; two wheelwrights, one Belgian, the other German; 2 Belgian blacksmiths; several carpenters doing good business; Five shoemakers and three

tailors, some Belgian, others German. All these artisans are also farmers.

There is no baker, each his cooking for his needs; each one also makes his soap, his candle, his cider, and his sugar or syrup; the sugar is made with the juice that results from the incision of a kind of *mappletree*, sugar maple. The price of the pound of pork is currently 6 to 7 cents.

The roads are good. The only way the emigrants have hitherto taken is the railroad from New York to Buffalo, which they leave at Attica or Darien, five or six leagues from their destination; but they complain of the mischief they encounter on this road, especially at Albany. It seems that if Canada's new direction for Green Bay is true, it would also benefit some Ontario ports near Sheldon, such as Rochester. The best season to settle there is, it is said, spring.

Belgians have a school well run by one of their compatriots of Luxembourg. The fee is \$ 5 per year per child.

The person who provided me with most of this information about Sheldon, is a Mr Henrich, from Messancy, who appears to be the most prosperous Belgian farmer of this locality. It has been established there for 10 years, it owns 100 acres, a score of cattle, 2 horses, 5 pigs, little poultry, makes 30 to 35 tons of fodder, and employs for six weeks of the summer 2 day laborers for 1 dollar and food; but they must be strong workers.

Source: Moniteur Belge of September 1, 1855

Wyoming County Federation of Historical Societies



On Saturday, Oct. 14, we hosted the Fall Luncheon for the Wyoming County Federation of Historical Societies at the Attica Hotel, with over 50 people attending. The food was great, thanks to Brian Fugle and Amanda Conlin and their staff. Our speaker was Mark Herman, an author and retired history teacher from Attica. He had a terrific program, "The Sheriff, A Murder and the D.A." in which he covered politics, a murder in Wethersfield, and Ku Klux Klan meetings, which all took place in Wyoming County in 1911-1912. Some of his former students attended, and others came away wishing we could have been in his history class. Sheldon agreed to take responsibility for the Federation for one more year. It turned out to be more fun and easier than we expected. The purpose of the Federation is to encourage and learn from each other. The Java Historical Society will be hosting the 2024 Spring Workshop of the Federation on March 6, in North Java. Details are on the next page. Hope to see you there!

Wyoming County Federation of Historical Societies

2024 Spring Workshop

Saturday, April 6, 2024

Location: Holy Family Church Hall, 4316 Route 98, North Java, NY

Hosted by the Java Historical Society

The Java Historical Society would be honored to have you join us April 6, for the Federation Spring Workshop, for this fun, educational and historic day! Contact Penny N-Logel, Historian, with any questions or concerns at 716-200-7621 or dime5463@gmail.com.

Program:

- 8:00- 8:45 Registration and Continental Breakfast from Cake Eaters Bakery
 8:45-9:00 Remarks & Introduction of Guests by Penny Logel
 9:00-9:45 Loving Genealogy by Kay Swyers
 9:45-10:00 Break
 10:00-10:45 Genealogy A to Z by Heidi McCluskey
 10:45-11:00 Break
 11:00-11:45 Time Capsule in Your Back Yard / Metal Detecting By Peter Jablonski
 11:45-12:00 Break
 12:00-1:00 Lunch Catered by Wayne Abbott of the Flip Side: Pot Roast, Roasted Vegetables, Macaroni & Cheese, Roll and Dessert
 1:00-1:15 Draw Raffle tickets/Questions or Announcements by guests
 1:15-2:15 Correct Gravestone Cleaning By Brian Daddis
 2:15-3:00 Tour of Holy Family Church (Formerly St. Nicholas)

Speakers to provide handouts. ****Note to Historians and Historical Societies: Please bring any flyers or promotional materials for our giveaway table. There will be a chance to announce news or upcoming events from your organization.**

The cost for the workshop and the catered luncheon is \$30.00 per person.

Please fill out this form below and send it with your check made out to Java Historical Society to: Elaine Murray, PO Box 45, Java Center, NY 14082.

Deadline to Register is March 16, 2024.

Name _____ Phone _____ Historical Society _____

Email _____ Address _____

No. Attending _____ Amount Enclosed _____

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 questions to Historian. Newsletters can be emailed. Large print versions are available. For previous newsletters, see website or contact Historian.

Sheldon Historical Society Officers:

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Janet Kirsch, Barbara Logel,

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Museum Curator - Barbara Logel

Classroom Curator & Town of

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Town of Sheldon Historian and

Newsletter Editor - Jeanne Mest

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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 PO Box 122, Strykersville, NY 14145

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+