



# 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"

Greetings and Happy Thanksgiving from all of us at the Sheldon Historical Society. We will be closed now 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. Also we work year-round to answer your historical inquiries, so please feel free to get in touch. Our monthly meetings will resume on February 20, 2020.

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*"What I truly enjoy in learning about history is its ability to immerse yourself in experiences you were never alive for. Institutions like the Sheldon Schoolhouse serve as necessary and tangible connections to this past that is so intertwined in our present. If places like this aren't preserved, then the crucial, final connections to these past cultures will be lost, and only left to be told about in textbooks."*

~2019 Scholarship Applicant

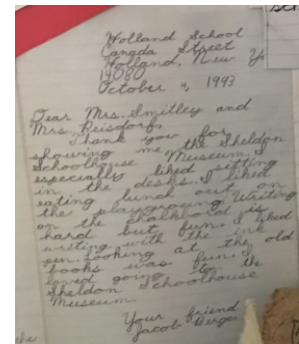
## CURSIVE STILL COUNTS!

*Congratulations to the Sheldon Historical Society for their blue ribbon from the Wyoming County Fair, for their display: "Cursive Still Counts!" Each historical society has a matching wooden box in which to present their display. They must be creative in order to think up a theme and find items to express it that will fit in this small space.*

*Many teachers and historians are concerned today that young people may not be learning to read or write in cursive. Advantages of cursive writing were pointed out, such as "Writing journals or letters in cursive is more personal", "Cursive helps develop our motor skills in a finer way", and "A request, apology or thank you note written in cursive is more meaningful than a printed one". The box contained a feather pen, ink, fountain pen and penmanship books from the 1800's, with some examples of beautifully written thank you notes received from visiting students over the years.*

*Cursive is integral to the thinking process and language comprehension.*

Betty Reisdorf with Sheldon's Fair Box



## ROBBER'S CAVE

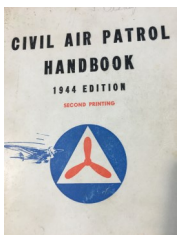
On the Harvey Stevenson farm on the west side of the village was what was known as the "Robber's Cave." where it was reported a local tough gang secreted their stolen loot. Mr. Bennion remembered around the year 1883, it was still visible on the farm on the Creek Road west of Buffalo Creek. The cave was west of the farm house at the edge of the woods. It was a dug-out affair with a ledge of rock overhead, and 75 years ago there remained a door of wood with a hasp to lock the same; about were bushes which almost obscured the site. Boys bent on exploring the hideout were shooed away by the owner. It is said that the gang of thieves used to operate throughout the vicinity, stealing almost anything that looked like profit to them, including horses, cattle, clothes from a wash line and made entry into houses and places of business. One of the gang, the only one then alive, was one Beebe, an elderly man with a head of red hair and a long beard. Apparently they were a clever group, able to move goods rapidly from place to place, disguise them, and dispose through other underworld outlets. Whether they were ever successfully apprehended is not known.

Excerpt from: STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES, By Harry S. Douglass, July 1958

## Marilyn's Memorabilia

Marilyn Smithley was an avid collector of historical memorabilia. She put so much of herself into everything she did at our museum, and always had just the right items to set up interesting displays. Even though she is no longer with us, her spirit lives on as we read through the books and information she left behind, and she continues to inspire us! We only wish she were here to tell us more stories and fill in the blanks for us. So we are depending on our other members and readers to help us discern some more of these as yet untold stories. Some of the articles you will read in this newsletter are the result of items that have been shared with us by Marilyn's family. I have tried to learn what I could about the Civil Air Patrol and the Farmer's Alliance & Industrial Union, but will be glad to have more input from anyone familiar with these organizations.

## THE CIVIL AIR PATROL



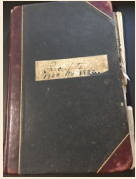
One book in her collection, The Civil Air Patrol, 1944, brought forth some unexpected memories from several of our members. Leona Meyer remembered watching for airplanes during World War II while sitting in a shed located at the site of the present town hall. They were given pictures of the different kinds of airplanes and how to identify them. In the years following, this practice continued. Betty Reisdorf, Janet Kirsch, and Doris Kirsch all took their turns sitting on this patrol. Doris remembered it well, since it was the site where her family's cheese factory once stood.

Anita Ripstein Hayes remembers being a child during those Cold War years and seeing her mother doing the same thing in North Java. "There was a little green shelter set out of the woods and you had to climb up a ladder and there the person would observe the sky for airplanes. They had a photo book that showed the planes that would be in the area. There was a phone in the building and if the person did not recognize the airplane they had to call immediately to report it." All these years later, knowing the outcome of WWII, it is eye-opening to realize that people were afraid our country would be invaded and possibly even taken over by the enemy.

The Civil Air Patrol was started in 1941, at the beginning of World War II. CAP's male and female volunteers were involved in a variety of wartime missions, including aircraft warning, courier service, missing aircraft searches, tracking operations & forest patrols. Still active today, it is considered America's premier service organization for carrying out emergency services & disaster relief missions nationwide. The mission of their 60,000 volunteers is to find the lost, provide comfort in times of disaster and help keep the homeland safe. They also promote aerospace education and youth programs.

Source: [www.gocivilairpatrol.com](http://www.gocivilairpatrol.com)

**SHELDON FARMER'S ALLIANCE AND INDUSTRIAL UNION, NO. 250, WYOMING COUNTY, N.Y.**



Sheldon Farmer's Alliance  
 and Industrial Union,  
 No. 250  
 Wyom. Co., N.Y.

Nestled in with Marilyn's items was a tiny ledger with the above inscription and a book of meeting minutes. Again, a mystery; none of us had ever heard of this. We soon learned the Farmer's Alliance & Industrial Union was an organization that started in the South and spread through the country after the Civil War. Its goal was to improve the economic conditions for farmers through the creation of cooperatives and political advocacy. They wanted lower shipping costs and used their political influence to achieve their goals. In April 1891, a chapter was formed in Sheldon. At the same time, chapters were begun in Varysburg, North Java, Wethersfield, Perry and throughout the county. Each town sent representatives to a county alliance group, and a Farmer's Alliance store was established in Attica in 1891. The first entries in the ledger showed a page for each farmer who belonged. Later entries listed farm produce sold by date, with various farmer's names and prices. It doesn't say whether the produce is being sold in Attica or is being shipped somewhere by train.

The popularity of the Farmer's Alliance spread quickly but it didn't last long into the 1900's. Eventually it led to the

Sheldon F. A. & I. U., No. 250, Wyom. Co., N.Y.

Date of Application 1891	Name	Date of Initiation 1891	Date of Application 1891	Name	Date of Initiation
April 10.	Frank Armborst	April 10.	May 23.	Frank A. Altmeyer	May 30.
" "	Eli Straub	" "	" "	Alphouse J. George	June 27.
" "	F. Fromholzer	" "	" "	Michael Armborst, jr.	July 11.
" "	John Weiss	" "	May 30.	John Altmeyer, sr.	May 30.
" "	Richard Fugel	" "	" "	Thomas Bauer	" "
" 18.	C. Giegler	" 13.	June 13.	Edw. Klein	June 27.
" "	M. D. George	" "	" "	Theo. Schily	July 11.
" "	Nicholas Weidig	" "	" 27	Jos. Conrad jr.	" "
" "	Henry Leroux	" "	" "	John Bauer	July 11.
" "	Wm. Harman	" "	July 25.	Wm. Bauer	Sept. 26.
" 20.	John Tomkinson, Stephensville	" "	Aug. 22.	Fred. Gittel	Sept. 26.
" "	Frank Schwalb	April 27	Sept. 22	" "	Oct. 10.
" "	John Metzger, Stephensville	" "	" "	" "	" "
" "	Wm. Servey	April 20.	Oct. 10.	Geo. F. Kopp	Oct. 31.
" "	Chr. Bosseler	" "	Nov. 14.	Wm. Bauer	Nov. 14.
" "	Const. Brumotte	" "	" 14	Jr. Calmest	" 14.
" 27	J. B. Altmeyer	" 27	Sept. 26	Henry Swyers	Feb. 1.
May 9	John Metzger	May 9.	Oct. 24	Jos. George, sr.	Dec. 12
" "	Thos. Brudenborg	" "	Nov. 14.	C. Winter	" "
" "	Aug. Koelber	May 23.	Nov. 28.	Frank Trahl	Dec. 12
" "	Mike W. Servey	May 9.	Dec. 9.	John Logel	" 12
" "	John Calhoun, jr.	" "	" 9.	John Glaser sr.	" 12
May 16.	Andr. Swyers	" 30.	" 9.	Jos. Jacoby sr.	" "
" "	Adolph Kopp	May 23.	" 9.	Geo. Manziere	Dec. 12
" 23.	John F. Altmeyer	May 23.	" 9.	John Cambrot	" "
" "	John Dominisse jr.	" "	" 10.	Thos. Cambrot	" "
" "	Wm. Harman	" "	" 11.	Michael Reding jr.	Jan. 9.
" "	" "	" "	" 11.	Mike Reding sr.	" "

Sept. 5. Food 136990

Aug 25, 1/2 doz Potatoes	2.00
Sept 4, 1/2 doz Potatoes on feed	.35
" " " " "	1.65
" 15, P. Bush, potatoes	1.50
" 18, 1/2 doz Potatoes, feed	6.00
" 15, Creamery check	36.02
" 22, For chickens	3.60
" 21, Paid up from Trust Co.	162.00
Oct 1, Walter Sackelberg survey	1.00
" 4, 1/2 doz Shelling pork 1915	11.43
" 1, Creamery check	31.72
" 11, " "	30.27
" 23, Hides, C. Harman	12.67
Nov 5, Amputation, book on calf	10.00
" 7, Calf skin, C. Harman	1.25
" 1, Creamery check	31.56
" 2, Paid up from Trust Co.	63.90
" 16, 5' rope & one calf	91.00
" 16, Received from Helen	57.00

creation of the Populist Party, which had a lot of political clout and brought about reform.

The Wyoming County Grange was formed in 1916. Today the National Grange continues as a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, which advocates for rural America and agriculture.

October 1891

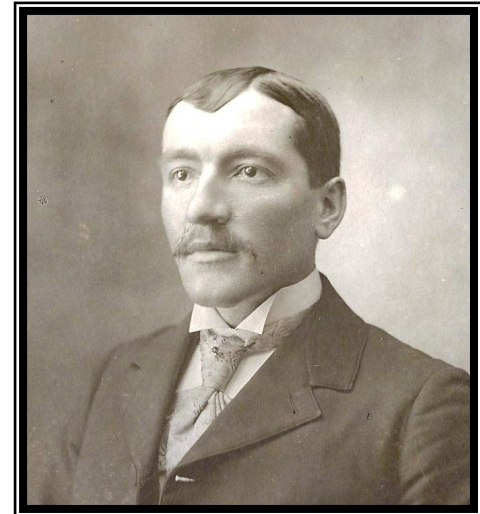
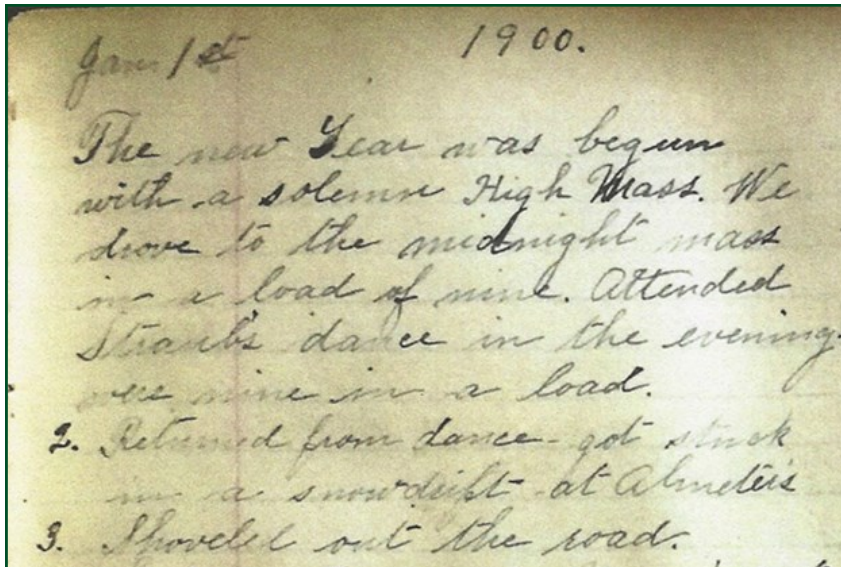
—The County Farmers' Alliance has decided to accept the proposition of J. D. Evans of Attica, to open and run an Alliance store in that place. A committee has been appointed from each Alliance club in the county to prepare rules and regulations.

January 1916

**New Grange Organized**

A new grange was organized at Sheldon, January 18, by County Deputy George T. Luce of Warsaw. The following officers were elected: Master, **Frank W. Kehl**, lecturer, Mrs. Helen Kehl; secretary, F. P. Kirsch. The charter list will be closed at the next meeting which will be held Tuesday, January 25. At this meeting installing officer, B. B. Tewksbury of Perry will install the officers elected. Preliminary work that assisted in the bringing about of this grange was done by Farm Bureau Manager, H. M. Bowen and H. W. Avery of Warsaw, at a Farmers' Institute held there Thursday January 13.

### THE JOURNAL OF FRANK W. KEHL, 1900-1904



Frank W. Kehl

Thus begins a journal that was found in an unlikely place - the middle of the book of minutes from the Farmer's Alliance. People were very frugal in those days and apparently it was not unusual for people to begin writing in whatever book they might have on hand, whether new or partly used. This journal was a bit of a puzzle at first, since there was no author's name. I had to peek ahead and after noticing several entries about "Helen", I learned her last name was Drilling, so I checked to see who Helen Drilling married and it was Frank Kehl. The writer had mentioned his brother Joe and sisters Lizzie, Mary and Anna, so all the names matched up. Then I realized this was the same F.W. Kehl who wrote a history of Sheldon in 1946, called the Town of Sheldon Historical Comments, Narratives and Summaries of Factual Events.

Frank Kehl's grandparents, Peter and Anna Loesch Kehl, were born in Sarre Prov., France. Peter Kehl (1797-1863) arrived in this country on May 7, 1855 on the Ship Admiral, from LeHavre. According to the 1900 Census, his wife Anna and their sons Nicholas and Peter (1836-1908) arrived in 1856. Son Peter and his wife Elizabeth Buecher Kehl had nine children, including Frank. Peter's obituary described him as one of the oldest and most esteemed citizens of Sheldon; a man of clear insight and judgement; a farmer of 52 years.

Frank Kehl's journal was written in great detail, and I wonder if he always knew he was meant to be a historian, as he recorded so much of his daily life. Each day is numbered and the entries reveal a lot about the everyday life of a farmer in those times. He begins on New Year's Day, 1900, which started out with going to church and then to a dance in the evening. They had "nine in a load" so everyone must have crowded into a wagon drawn by a team of horses, and they got stuck in the snow at Almeter's. The following week he stopped after church at J.B. Almeter's and ordered a new, flat runner sleigh. Frank spent a lot of time sawing logs in the woods and hauling them to the sawmill. He was in the process of buying his own farm. In February he bought a horse from John Conrad for \$70, and then he sold his horse Flora to Balthasar George for \$34.00. He took a load of potatoes to East Aurora where he found that 73 teams had brought potatoes and had to wait while they were all loaded, one at a time, on the railroad cars.

One night he went to a meeting at the schoolhouse, where they were organizing a C.B.L. lodge (probably the Catholic Benevolent Legion). He belonged to several community service organizations, between church, school board and the fire insurance company he worked for. In early May, he prepared ground

for plowing by hitching his team to tree limbs and pulling out the apple tree stumps. Then he rolled, plowed, dragged and sowed corn, built a hog pen and sheared sheep. On May 28, he went to Aurora after seed corn and bought a new buggy and a new suit of gray clothes. It appears that something exciting is coming up soon! Yet, Frank continues planting potatoes and making cheese, baling hay, threshing and butchering. On a Sunday in June, he finally took a break in the evening and played his cornet along with Mr. Mooney on the fiddle. One Sunday night in August he went to look for his lost bull, along with the help of Frank Sindacuse and his wife, Katie Lougel, and Mrs. Anna Youngers (his sister) and her son. He did not find the bull. He doesn't mention it again, so I wonder if he ever found him. Would that bull just have wandered off, maybe in the woods, never to be seen again? On September 10, he found that Calteaux's cows were in his corn. At a later date he went to find his heifers and got them out of Almeter's green pasture.

On September 24, he washed his buggy...then September 25, the big day finally came. But his journal just says, "Wedding - Left for Buffalo in PM". He goes into details about the honeymoon, though. First they saw the sights of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, including the State Hospital, the Pan-Am, Sattlers and Forest Lawn. Then they went to the docks and bought tickets to Cleveland. They left on the steamship, City of Erie, at 9 PM & arrived at 7:30 AM; went to mass at St. John's where the bishop was present and to another mass at the German church, St. Peter's. Then they took the trolley to the park and the Garfield Monument, returning to the boat in the evening, and home to Buffalo by 7:30 the next morning. By 11 PM that night, they were back home in Sheldon.

The journal goes on to record their busy lives after marriage. Frank notes on October 14, "Helen and I went to church together for the first time in Sheldon." Church was such an important part of their lives.

*Logue went along with...*

24. Washed up buggy in A.M. - Joe went after Miss Brecker, Stephenville in A.M. - Miss Brecker, sister Mary & I went to Drillings in P.M.

25. Wedding - left for Buffalo in P.M.

26. Called at Stutzki's - visited State Hospital & Pan-American in P.M.

27. Went to Chippewa market - visited St. Michael's church in A.M. - went to Niagara Falls in P.M.

28. Went to Saddlers in A.M. - visited Forest Lawn in P.M. - called on Mary in evening.

29. Went to the docks and bought tickets for Cleveland - prepared our lunch in A.M. - went to the theatre in P.M. - left for Cleveland on City of Erie at 9 P.M.

30. Sunday - arrived at Cleveland at 7:30 A.M. - went to St. John's Cathedral, was present at bishop's mass and sermon - attended high mass at the German St. Peter church - had lunch at restaurant - took trolley out Euclid avenue to park & Garfield Monument about 7 miles - returned to boat in evening.

## KEHL—DRILLING.

Miss Helen M. Drilling of Bennington was married to Frank W. Kehl of Sheldon on Tuesday at the East Bennington Catholic church at 10 a. m., Rev. Father Franz, officiating. Only the immediate members and friends of both families were present. The young couple took a short wedding trip west, and will return sometime next week. They will go to house-keeping at Sheldon. Their many friends wish them a long life of happiness and prosperity.

## New Director, Adria Motor Car Co., of Batavia.

Mr. Frank W. Kehl, a progressive farmer and breeder of Holstein cattle of Sheldon has been elected a member of the board of directors of the above company.

Mr. Kehl being widely known for his honesty and straightforwardness was chosen from a number of prominent men, by the company.

This newspaper clipping indicates Frank's good reputation in the community.

Every Sunday shows them going to mass and often mentions special events such as First Communion, Confirmation, Jubilee, the Blessing of St. Blaise, and 40 Hours of Adoration.

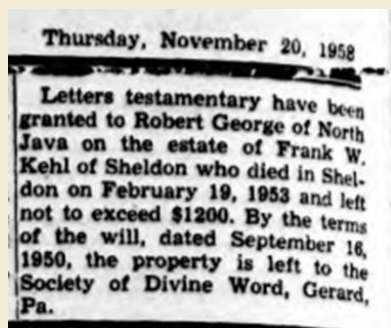
In October he hired a Nic Baush to help dig potatoes. The next morning, "Nic Bausch took sick and I was kept busy waiting on the patient all day." He "removed him to the Poor House that evening"! On Christmas, they took the buggy to church, but the next Sunday he drove to church with his team; a month later, they walked there. Their farm was on North Sheldon Road (near P.J. Almeter's), so that was a bit of a hike, in January. On December 31, Lizzie, Frank and Helen went to Communion at Midnight Mass, attended Harmon's Dance until 3 o'clock and stayed at the church until morning.

On September 18, 1901, Frank and Helen went to Buffalo to see the Pan Am Exposition. They took the 7:05 A.M. train from Aurora and left Buffalo at 10:25 P.M. He doesn't mention the assassination of President William Mckinley that occurred just a few days before.

Frank Kehl's journal ends in 1904. In 1927 a historical society was formed in the town of Sheldon. F.W. Kehl was the President. In his book from 1946 he said they didn't do much originally as they didn't have the funds, but felt it was important to start recording the town's history. It wasn't until about 1976 that the society was started up again, and the story of our schoolhouse museum began.

Frank and Helen had no children. Helen Magdalena Drilling Kehl died at age 73 on June 25, 1943. Frank W. Kehl was 84 when he passed away on February 19, 1953. They are buried at St. Cecilia's Cemetery. According to the newspaper, his estate was left, "not to exceed \$1200" and his property was left to the Society of Divine Word, Gerard, PA.

Submitted by Jeanne Mest



Pan-Am Exposition at night, 1901

### Tashmoo v. City of Erie in the grandest steamboat race in the history of American navigation

In June 1901, the two sidewheel steamships embarked on a nearly 100-mile race, from Cleveland to Erie, to determine the fastest ship on the Great Lakes. At stake were bragging rights, plus more than \$100,000 in bets on both sides, according to breathless newspaper accounts.

"In the grandest steamboat race in the history of American navigation...the magnificent craft raced for nearly a hundred miles, they were but a few boat lengths apart. No other such struggle is known in history," About 30,000 people watched the race, from docks and excursion boats in Cleveland, lining the shore, to Erie, PA. The **Tashmoo** regularly ran passenger trips from Port Huron, Michigan, to Detroit. It's nickname was "**The White Flyer**".

The **City of Erie** was built in 1898. It carried passengers between Cleveland, Erie and Buffalo and earned the nickname "**The Honeymoon Special**" for all the couples aboard celebrating their marriage.



### SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM NEWS:



Washing Machine from Orangeville

We have enjoyed having several new visitors this year. County Historian Cindy Amrhein's latest project, Where in Wyoming County is the History Gnome, brought in some guests who had never seen our Schoolhouse Museum. They were able to find both Sheldon & Orangeville gnomes, since we now have a special section for Orangeville, with a display by their historian, Laury Lakas. Thanks to the extra help from Laury, her husband Steve & her mother Debbie Spink, we were able to be open on the last Saturday of each month, along with our regular Tuesday afternoon hours.

**Save the Date: Saturday, April 25, 2020**

Sheldon Historical Society will be hosting the Spring Workshop for the Wyoming County Federation of Historical Societies. Details to follow. Hope to see you there!

### HISTORIAN'S CORNER

Recently we had some new historical books added to our collection. In September I went to a conference put on by APHNYS, the Association for Public Historians in New York State, and my entry at the Pomeroy Foundation table won a lovely illustrated history of Syracuse, "Crossroads in Time". Please take a look at it the next time you are in the museum.

Then we had a visitor, an author with roots in Sheldon, who donated her new book and signed up for membership in our historical society. Maureen Mooney Reid has written a novel, "Becoming Herself", which takes place in Sheldon in the early 1900's. This is a work of fiction, not a memoir, but she has used the names of her ancestors for the characters in the book. Eli and Margaret George were very well known and highly regarded members of the community, and were ancestors of many of our readers. The story begins when the fictional Maggie Clancy arrives in America, finds herself in an orphanage and adopted by a childless couple from Sheldon. It's been a long time since I read a book that was hard to put down, and I finished this one in one day. Maggie's life spans a time when there were so many changes for women, from losing the corset to gaining the vote. The book was made even more enjoyable by the fact you could picture so many of the places in which the story took place.



Reading about the fictional couple made me curious about the real life Eli and Margaret. I was delighted to learn they were the owners of the Green Parrot Inn, which we featured in our April 2017 newsletter. They hosted the huge George Family Reunions there in the late 1920's. Margaret did indeed have a beautiful singing voice and was the church organist for many years. I look forward to learning more about them in the future.

Frank and Helen Kehl, as well as Eli and Margaret George, lived through exciting times of change. They went from horse driven wagons to automobiles; from candles and gaslight to electricity. My great grandparents were married in 1900, and reading Frank Kehl's journal brought to life so much of what they must have experienced on their farm.

The journal has been copied and is available for you to read at the Schoolhouse Museum. Please email or call if you have anything to add to any of our stories. There is so much yet to be told.

~ Jeanne Mest

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

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](mailto:sheldonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com)  
or [metzgermaryann@gmail.com](mailto: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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If your newsletter arrives in  
damaged condition, please call  
or email and we will replace it.



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Hilltop Printshop  
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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](mailto:Sheldonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com)

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

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### 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