



Township of Sheldon Historical Society & Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 2

Charter Issue

Feb. 2012

An update on our progress as a Society and a Chartered Museum & "A new look at old news from our town."

Sheldon Historical Society Officers Board Members & Curators

10/ 2011 - 10/2012

Pres.-Michael Szucs

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Classroom Curator -Marilyn Smithley

Archival Curator - Jeanne Mest

Museum Curator - Board presides until position is filled

Email - Sheldonhistoricalsociety@hotmail.com

Museum Telephone - 1-585-457-7033

Alternate Email - mamezger@rochester.rr.com

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Meetings are held the third Thurs. of the month through Oct. Non members are also welcome to attend.

Volunteers are needed on all committees, please join us.

WELCOME to the second issue of our quarterly newsletters. We hope all of you had a great Holiday Season. Soon spring will be upon us and with it comes new ideas. We have taken a respite for a few months but will soon be back at the museum in full swing. Newsletter - Compiled by Mary Ann Metzger and Jeanne Mest with the help of various members of the Town & Society. (For submissions, corrections, and additions please email us or leave a message.)

A Few words from our President:

*The winter hiatus is coming to an end. As a club we will try to be successful with projects we are known for, a new year to begin planning for the annual yard sale, the continued success of the newsletter and new projects to be decided on. This will begin at our first meeting on **February 16, 2012** at the schoolhouse. Please plan on attending, new members and new ideas are always welcome.*

Michael Szucs

The challenge of history is to recover the past and introduce it to the present. ~David Thelen

Associate with men of good quality if you esteem your own reputation; for it is better be alone than in bad company."

George Washington

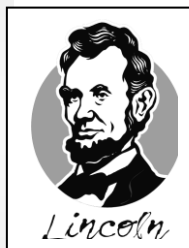
Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth.

George Washington

In a letter to James Madison, Mar. 2, 1788



Reminder to attend the first meeting of 2012 on Feb.16 at the School House Museum. Plans have to be started for the Town wide sale the first weekend in June. Also, decisions have to be made on displays. Come and give your input; we always look for new ideas.



*I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true.
I am not bound to succeed,
but I am bound to live by the light that I have.
I must stand with anybody that stands right,
and stand with him while he is right,
and part with him when he goes wrong.*

Abraham Lincoln

Since our last newsletter:

Welcome new members for 2012:

David Metzger

Warren Zahler

Ceal McCoy

Nina Fontaine (Nina is New member and lifetime member)

PAID AS LIFETIME MEMBERS:

Betty Reisdorf

Bob & Donna Kirsch

Robert Reisdorf

Nina Fountain (New lifetime member

DUES PAID FOR ANOTHER YEAR

Rita Metzger,

M.A. Reisdorf,

Carol Zittel,

Norman & Carol Kehl,

Paul & Janet Kirsch,

K.J. Kremlick,

Jr., Marcella Peters..

Our list continues to increase, please pass the word that all are welcome.

If we in err did not mention someone, it was not intentional and our apologies. We are happy to have you all as members and think it will be a very rewarding experience for you to be a part of preserving our past.

Attention Members

We will soon be preparing for the upcoming season, deciding on displays, making choices of what to leave on exhibit and what to change.

Our Museum displays for 2011 were:

School class room in the 1918 era.

Vintage clothing display from around 1900.

Depression glassware.

Civil War display in commemoration of 150 Anniversary

Local farm related displays & History

Sheldon band display.

Please let us know if there is something you would like to see on display; maybe you would like to set up an exhibit or help with one or you might just have something you could share. We need and welcome input from all members, not only with displays but in various ways volunteering your time and expertise. We are in looking for volunteers to help us sort and preserve archival material. The more interest we have, the more likely we will be able to continue in our quest for town history, preserving both archives and artifacts. How do you feel you could contribute? We are anxious to hear from you.

A Tribute to our men who served in the military

Peter Thanisch (Tharnish)



Peter Thanisch was born in Sheldon, NY on July 7, 1841. His parents were John Jacob Thanisch and Catherine (Meyer) (Meier) Thanisch. Peter was a cannonier during the Civil War. He enlisted from NY State and spent a good deal of time in New Orleans, Louisiana. His group was ship-wrecked during the Civil War, details in NY Archives.

Attention: Did someone in your family serve in the military or are currently in active duty? Please submit their story, picture and where and when they served, our military history will not be complete without it. Any information however small is welcome.



The first recorded association of Valentine's Day with romantic love is in *Parlement of Foules* (1382) by Geoffrey Chaucer¹⁹ Chaucer wrote:
*For this was on seynt Volantynys day
 Whan every bryd comyth there to chese his make.*
 ("For this was Saint Valentine's Day, when every bird cometh there to choose his mate.)

Approximately 150 million Valentine's Day cards are exchanged annually, making Valentine's Day the second most popular card-sending holiday after Christmas.

Albert and Frances Armbrust Simons (picture above)
 Albert and Frances were married at St. Cecilia's Church in 1905. About 1907 they were living in Va. where their son Walter was born. By 1910 they had moved to Brassfield, NC, where their son Francis was born. Albert was a lumberjack for a saw-mill. He died in 1937 in Dutchville, NC and is buried in the St. Cecilia's cemetery (South). Frances died in 1940 in Sheldon and is also buried there.

Clippings from Sheldon Democrat: Jan 22, 1941
 At the end of the first quarter of 1940-1941, Miss Virginia Boyd and Mr. John Ewell, the teachers of Dist. # 1 in Johnsonburg, have listed Bernardine Zahler, grade 8, as headng the Honor Roll with a 98, second is Paul Murphy, grade 1, with a 95. Ray Luce, grade 3, came in 3rd with a 94.

Old Farm news.....
 From Sheldon Democrat Jan. 22, 1941 issue



Syrup Producers Meet in Varysburg

Prof. J.A. Cope of the Forestry Department will be in Wyoming Co. on Tues, Jan 28, to meet with the Maple Syrup Producers of the Co. and bring them the latest information on the care of the sugar bush and the manufacture of maple syrup. This meeting will be held in the Varysburg Grange Hall starting at 10 o'clock in the morning and continuing throughout the day. Arrangements are being made for lunch at noon. Prof. Cope will discuss the care and management of the sugar bush to produce the greatest amount of syrup per tree. Ellsworth Davies of Wyoming has a large sugar bush and tapped about 1300 trees. He reported that they regularly produced as much syrup from 500 trees in his upper bush where the cows were fenced out as he made for the 800 trees in the lower bush where the cows were allowed to graze. Many syrup producers in the county can profitably increase their production by keeping the cows out of the woods. Incidentally the cows will produce just as much milk as they get very little nourishment form the grass and thickets that they get in the woods. All maple syrup producers will be welcome at this meeting. Come and bring you neighbors.



Sugar shanty on former Reisdorf farm, located on Rt. 78 in Strvkersville. NY. built around 1930

The sugar content of sap is typically between 2 and 2.75% meaning that it usually takes 40 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of syrup

School No. 6 on the Corner of Bartz Rd. and Perry Rd. This corners is called Plants Corners.



School News

The society is looking for information, pictures and stories on the rural one room school houses in Sheldon. At one time there were 15 in the town. Please, if you have attended, send us a memory or story, help in our quest to preserve this bit of history. Please send group pictures you may have. We will copy and return.

Correction:

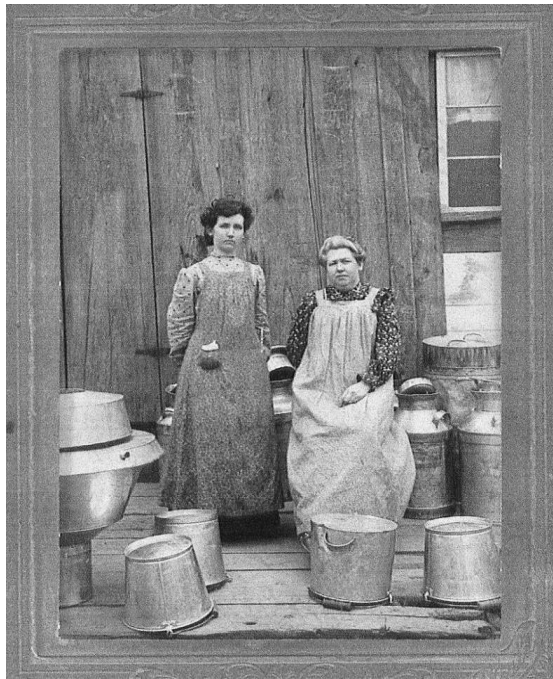
Last month we displayed a picture of a haystack on the Jacob George farm. Our mistake, Paul Kirsch and Bob Reisdorf, grandsons of Jake, said it was a stack of oats. They were piled in a stack to let them sweat out, and then they were threshed. This was done in the back of the barn on the Jacob George farm, now owned by Nick Perry family. Sorry, could have fooled us.

Question Box (Queries Welcome)

Query: Does anyone have information or stories of the orphan train that came from NYC and passed through to Buffalo? Some children lived with families in Sheldon. We would like to know more.

Unidentified picture supposedly from Strykersville, NY

This is second in a series of unidentified pictures that we will post. Can you help? We have a scrapbook of unidentified pictures, feel free to add any town pictures you would like to have identified.



Thanks to Liz Ivers for identifying the picture below from the previous issue.



Simon and Barbara Petz - Frank standing in back, Clara (Petz) Fontaine, and Mary Anna (Petz) George

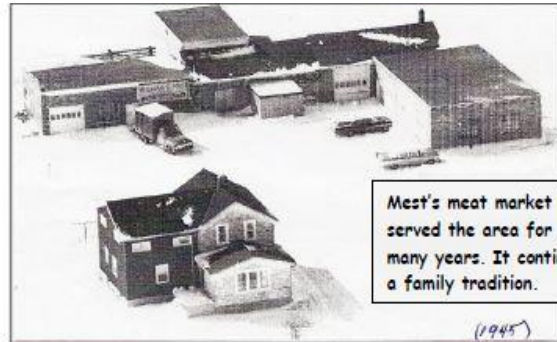
Obituary corner:

We are working on an extensive collection of obituaries from the mid 1800's to the present. They are a link to our past. If you have any to share, please contact us.

This issue's Obit from Sheldon Democrat Dec. 25, 1940.

William J. Mest:

William J. Mest aged 55, died at a hospital in Buffalo on Dec. 14, 1940. He had been in ill health for some time. Mr. Mest was born in Sheldon the son of the late John and Anna Zahler Mest. He was married to Ann Strobl in June, 1916. At the age of 14 he started buying cattle with his father and had been a dealer for 41 years, and always lived in Sheldon. Besides his wife, he leaves his children, Anna, Helen, John, Marian, Leona, William Jr., and George. Mr. Mest was a member of the Varysburg Grange 1046. Funeral services were held at St. Cecilia's Church with the Rev. Charles Arnold officiating with burial at Sheldon.



Mest's meat market has served the area for many years. It continues a family tradition.

(1945)

The W.G. Mest Meat Packing Company

This local business began in the post-war years following World War II, when everyone still processed their own beef at home on the farm. William Mest came from a family of cattle dealers, but he had a new idea. He would provide a service for people by processing the meat for them. William purchased some property on Big Tree Road in Sheldon, near Harris Corners, and started out in a back building. Soon he built a packing plant, where the animals could be processed under complete government inspection, with constant refrigeration, which would not be available on the home farm. Everything came together at the right time. The business evolved into both wholesale and retail sales of beef, pork, veal and lamb. Various sausages and other specialty meats were added to the product line. As their reputation spread, customers came from Buffalo and other locations, so it was good for the local economy. At one time, William had 10 or more employees, providing jobs for not only his sons, but other relatives and neighbors. Today the W.G. Mest Meat Packing Company is operated by his youngest son. Another son took the experience and knowledge he learned from working with his father, and he and his wife began their own meat packing business in Batavia, M&M Meats.

William G. Mest passed away at the age of 88 on Jan. 28, 2012. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Mary "Betty" Noecker Mest. They had 9 children, 31 grandchildren and 39 great grandchildren. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at St. John Neumann Parish, St. Cecilia's site, where he was a Eucharistic minister.

PORK SAUSAGE

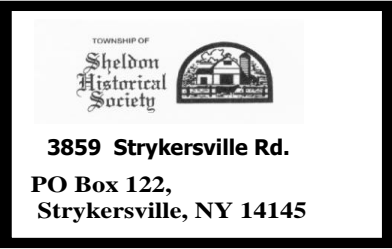
- 10 lbs. meat
- 1 Tbsp. sage
- 1 Tbsp. pepper
- 10 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ginger



The old fashioned meat grinder was a popular item used often. It was never stored too far away as it was used often.

Recipe taken from Sheldon bicentennial cookbook

Rebecca Johnson



"I don't know who my Grandfather was, I am more concerned to know what his Grandson will be."
 quote from Abraham Lincoln

The Historical Society welcomes new members! If you find local History interesting, we hope that you make a membership contribution and join us. It is open to anyone with an interest in the history of Sheldon, or a desire to volunteer services without restriction to age or place of residence. We maintain a School House Museum that is state chartered. There is always work to do to maintain this structure and to continue our research of data and archives and preserve treasured artifacts.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

DATE: _____

Highlights inside this issue include :
 Mystery picture identified.
 War of 1812 facts
 Syrup producers meet in Varysburg.
Meeting Feb. 16, 2012 @ 7:00 at School

Queries are welcome. We are here to help you with your genealogy or facts of past history in Sheldon.
 Email us at Sheldonhistoricalsocietv@hotmail.com

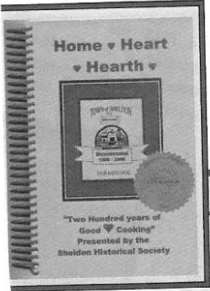
Make check payable to The Town of Sheldon Historical Society.

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



A nostalgic tabloid; you won't want to miss it.

Attention:
 The date on the address label signifies the due date of your membership. Don't let your subscription lapse. Dues are \$5.00 a year and \$50.00 per person for lifetime membership. This helps us continue Historical research of the Town of Sheldon.



We still have award winning Bicentennial Cookbooks for sale.
\$16.00
They make excellent gifts.

The contribution of your time, sharing your artifacts and archival material along with monetary donations are deeply appreciated.

Anniversary of the War of 1812

Since 2012 is the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, we were trying to think of what we could do at our Sheldon museum to commemorate it. I wondered if anyone in Sheldon had artifacts or stories of their ancestors from the War of 1812, when my friend reminded me that Sheldon was just beginning to get settled at that time, and there were not too many pioneers yet, so there would only be a few that went to war. Most of our ancestors arrived in the mid 1850's, during the German wave of immigration. There it was, another reminder of how much I still have to learn about our town history, as well as that of our country. It amazes me how much more interesting history is to me now than when I was in school. I remember learning the basics about the Revolutionary War, but not much about the War of 1812, so I've been trying to understand it better, and along the way I learned more about the American Revolution. Recently I read two novels about that time in our history, written in the 1940's by E.R. Eastman. In his books, **The Destroyers** and **The Settlers**, Mr. Eastman was able to intertwine his fictional characters with many historical figures, and bring them all to life.

The Destroyers tells the story of the struggles of early American colonists in New York. In 1778, as the Revolutionary War was raging, the British were inciting the Indians to attack and kill these pioneers. Then came a devastating massacre of the whole town of Cherry Valley, north of Cooperstown, led by Joseph Brant, Walter Butler and Mary Jemison's husband, Hiokatoo. The people on the frontier were terrified after the gruesome killings, and soldiers wanted to leave the army to go home to protect their families. General Washington knew he had to do something to put a stop to this. The mission was so important that he dispatched a third of his Continental Army troops to Western New York. General John Sullivan headed north with 3,000 men, meeting General James Clinton and covering over 500 miles through the wilderness.

This was the Sullivan - Clinton campaign. The first time I heard of it was when reading about Mary Jemison and her family hiding in the ravines of Stony Brook Glen at **Varysburg**, as she fled from Sullivan's army. Well, this shed a new light on that story for me. Yes, the armies of Generals Clinton and John Sullivan did combine to push the Indians back from the Mohawk to the Susquehanna River, destroying their villages and burning their crops, all the way through Elmira, and up through the Finger Lakes, from Canandaigua to Geneseo. Over 40 Indian villages and 160,000 bushels of corn were consumed. The soldiers themselves came to regret the waste of all the crops, but everything had to be destroyed so the Indians would not go back to their villages and continue their attacks on the white settlers.

The Sullivan - Clinton Expedition made it safer for settlers to come into the "Genesee Country". This was truly Indian country until then. It broke the power of the Iroquois, who were the strongest and most intelligent of the American Indians. It stopped further invasions by the British, and was a critical turning point in the Revolutionary War. After the war, free land was given to soldiers, and a huge wave of immigration from the east began.

Thirty years later, the same characters appear again in **The Settlers**, a novel about the pioneers' journey and struggles. Since the first settlers of **Sheldon** came in 1804, it seems that their experiences might be similar.

When two families, a grizzled old Indian scout, and a schoolmaster turned doctor set out on a cold winter day in February 1807, they left their homes and loved ones behind, possibly forever. Traveling on two longsleighs drawn by oxen, loaded up with a few household utensils, some cornmeal, slabs of bacon, and several bushels of wheat, they headed west. From Claverack, across the Hudson River, their journey to Leicester would take at least 20 days. Now I learned why pioneers always left in the winter; they had to cross all the rivers while they were still frozen. The longsleighs could only cover a few miles each day, before it was time to look for shelter under some hemlock trees. The women slept in the sleighs on hemlock boughs covered with blankets, the men on boughs on the ground.

The Settlers describes in colorful detail how upon reaching Geneseo, the woods were cleared, cabins built and crops raised. Their community grew, and neighbors helped each other. It was common for the now somewhat friendly Indians, even great chiefs like Farmer's Brother and Red Jacket, to walk right into their cabins, since the Indian reservation was nearby. That made for some interesting conversations.

War was declared in 1812, and every able man was expected to go. There were heroes, and there were traitors. The battles and the burning of the city of Buffalo are described in such detail that you can almost see the people escaping the city in their panic; refugees, Indians, soldiers, women and children, fleeing from Buffalo through Hamburg & Aurora, following the Big Tree Road all the way to Geneseo.

Edward Roe Eastman believed that history should be taught in a way that makes the characters come alive; their work, their hopes, their loves, so that the reader is carried back in time and place to live in the imagination with these people who made history. His books still bring history to life.

Contributed by Jeanne Mest, archival curator

P.S. If anyone does have memorabilia from the War of 1812, please let us know!

Copies of The Destroyers and The Settlers are available at the museum,

and may be borrowed by members of the historical society.

Sources:

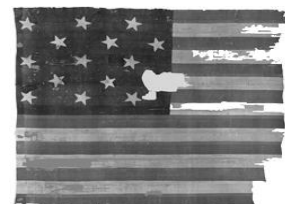
Eastman, E.R., *The Destroyers*

Eastman, E.R., *The Settlers*

"Barber B. Conable Talks about The Sullivan Expedition", *Historical Wyoming*, Oct. 1979, pg 35

"Sullivan/Clinton Campaign, Then and Now" <http://sullivanclinton.com>

Kammen, Carol; <http://books.google.com>



War of 1812 flag

This is the flag that inspired Francis Scott Key to write "**The Star-Spangled Banner.**"

The flag, which flew over Fort McHenry in Baltimore during the 1814 battle at the fort, is a 15-star, 15-stripe garrison flag made in 1813 and loosely woven so that it could fly on a 90-foot flagpole

War of 1812- Impact was felt in The Town of Sheldon

Taken per word from "Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of WNY

The Historical Society has in its possession in the School House Museum "The Pioneer History of the Holland Land Co." by Orsamus Turner.

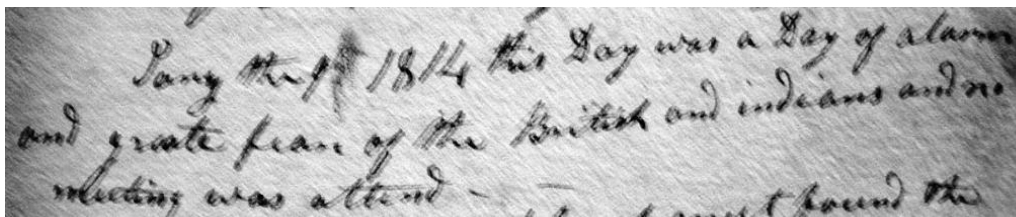
Sheldon witnesses Influx of People Fleeing Buffalo

Of the stirring and diversified scenes of flight and refuge, presented upon the south route, via Willink and the old "Big Tree" road on the 30th of Dec., the author is enabled to give some account from personal observation and recollection. Detached members of many of the families of Buffalo, took that route. During the latter part of the 30th, and forenoon of the 31st, the road from Willink to **Turner's Corners in Sheldon**, presented one continuous column of retreating soldiers, men, women and children from Buffalo, families from the settlements in all the southern portion of what is now Erie Co., and the Indians *en masse*, from the Buffalo reservations. An ox sled would come along bearing wounded soldiers, whose companions had perhaps pressed the slow team into their service; another, with the family of a settler, a few household goods that had been hustled upon it, and one, two or three, wearied females from Buffalo, who had begged the privilege of a ride and the rest that it afforded; then a litter, borne upon men's shoulders, upon which was reclined, a wounded soldier, or an infirm citizen; then squads of women and children on foot; then a remnant of some dispersed corps of militia, hugging as booty, "as spoils of the vanquished," the arms they had neglected to use; then squads and families of Indians, on foot and on ponies, the squaw with her papoose upon her back, and a bevy of juvenile Seneca's in her train' and all this is but a stunted program of the scene that was presented. Bread, meats and drinks, soon vanished from the log taverns on the routes and the stationary and fleeing settlers divided their scanty stores with the almost famished that came from the frontiers.

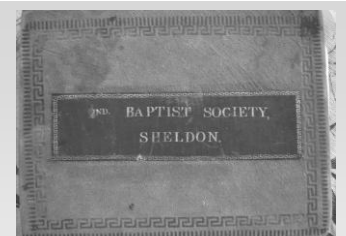
It was a crisis of suffering and privation; a winter of gloom and despondency. Language, at this distant day, is inadequate to enable the reader fully to realize the then condition of the Holland Purchase. Throughout all the back settlements, there were the half deserted neighborhoods; the solitary log house, no smoke rising from its stick chimney; cattle, sheep, and swine, hovering around and looking in vain for someone to deal out their accustomed food. Upon the immediate frontier, stretching out in a long continuous line, from a strong fortress, where the invaders were entrenched, were the blackened remains of once happy homes, scathed and desolated; a gloomy stillness brooding over the scene, so profound, that the gaunt wolf, usually stealthy and prowling, came out of his forest haunts at med day, and lapped the clotted snow, or snatched the dismembered limb of a human corpse that in haste and flight had been denied the right of sepulture!

Sheldon Pioneer Settler and Son Die

The details of the war of 1812 have not taken a range wide enough to embrace such reminiscences as the one promised upon this page. There was a singular and mournful fatality attending the family of the early pioneer mentioned by Judge Porter, in connection with one of his early advents, and by the author, in connections with some sketches of early settlement in Wyoming.- Orange **Brace**. At the commencement of the war, the family consisted of the parents, three sons, and three daughters. The old gentleman and one of the sons went upon the lines under Smyth's proclamation, and both died at Buffalo, of the prevailing epidemic; and a daughter died at Canandaigua, where she was attending school, about the same time. A son-in-law, Ardin Merrill, was afterwards killed on board of a ferry boat, near the Canada shore, opposite Black Rock. **The neighborhood of their residence, in Sheldon, was more than ordinarily afflicted; almost every family in it mourned the death of one or more of its members.**



Taken from Strykersville Baptist Church book - no meeting was held because of great fear of the British and Indians



One of the oldest books from our Town



War of 1812 Canteen

WAR OF 1812 CANTEEN (above)

The cheese box was popular due to the light weight and the lower cost to manufacture it. It was popular from the late Revolutionary War to the War of 1812.



Next month's newsletter:
Strykersville woman is Widow of Soldier from War of 1812

Powder Horns during the War of 1812

Oxen and cattle horns were perfect for the soldier and frontiersman to fabricate an ideal container to carry and dispense his gunpowder. It was a fairly simple procedure to form the horn into a watertight, portable, easy to use container. After carefully selecting the horn of proper size and shape, it was boiled until the pith could be removed, making it hollow. It was then scraped smooth on the outside, and a hole drilled through the pointed-or spout- end. This was plugged with a small wooden stopper, and it was from this end that the powder charge was measured. A wood plug was carved for the butt of the horn, and was attached to the horn with wooden pegs or tiny metal nails. Less usual was a type of friction fitting of the base plug, which was then glued into place. Lastly, some type of attachment for a shoulder strap, like staple, different types of screws or turned knobs, was added to the horn base.

Excerpts from *Folk Art of Early America: The Engraved Powder Horn*, by Jim Dresslar

Life is so different today, it strains the imagination to realize the hardships those people endured to extend the American frontier. There was constant war between the native Indians and the white settlers; often families possessed only the clothes they wore, an axe, a few hand tools, their gun and powder horn. Many times they lived in slapped-together lean-tos until they were able to build a more permanent structure.

