



The Backbone

A publication of the Backbone Ridge History Group of Schuyler, Seneca, and Tompkins Counties

BECAUSE HISTORY MATTERS

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THE WOVEN COVERLET— WHO WAS ELIZABETH REYNOLDS? BY MARTY SCHLABACH



Who was Elizabeth Reynolds? Could she have been from Reynoldsville? She most likely lived somewhere between Seneca and Cayuga lakes, since this blue and white coverlet was woven in 1839 for her by J. M. Davidson, a weaver located in Lodi, NY.

J. M. Davidson called himself a ‘fancy weaver’. Woven coverlets can be in broad terms divided into two types based on the pattern and the kind of loom need to weave them; geometric or figured & fancy. Geometric patterned coverlets (below) could be woven on a 4 harness loom, a loom that would also have been used to weave other textiles like fabric for clothing, blankets, towels, bed sheets and the like. Figured & fancy coverlets, like

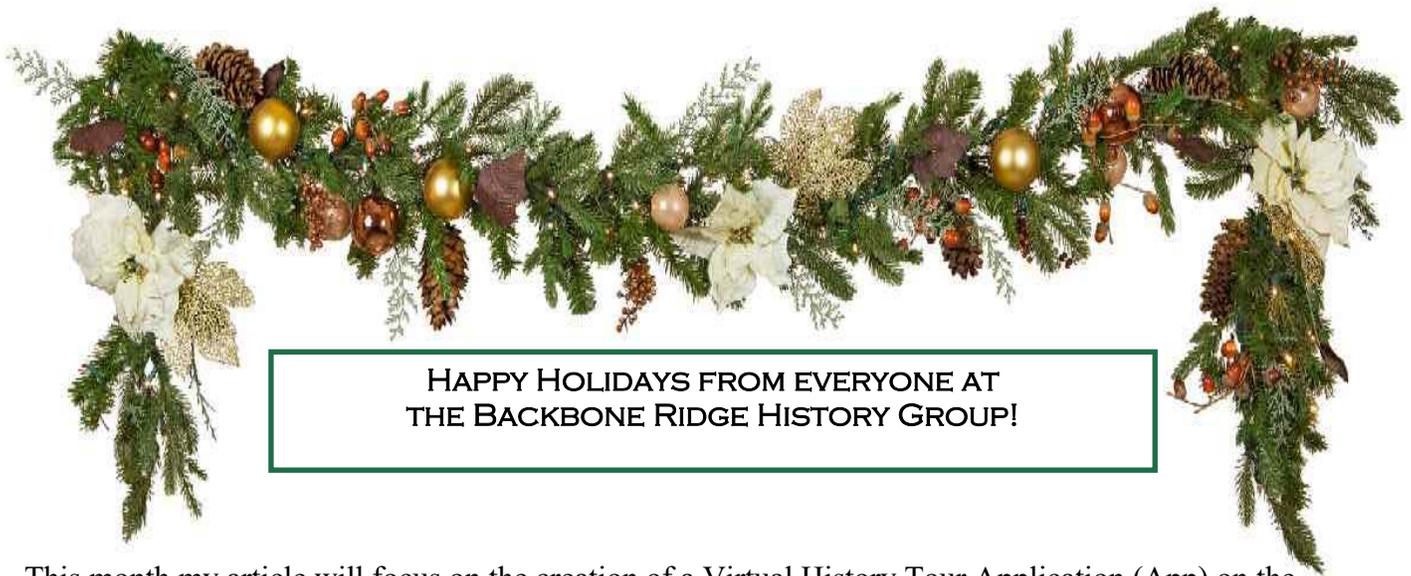
the one pictured above, required a special loom attachment that utilized punch cards to produce very complex patterns. Hence the term ‘fancy weaver’, to distinguish J. M. Davidson’s weaving from the more common looms and weaving. Invented by Joseph Marie Jacquard in France and introduced into the US in the 1820s, there were other similar attachments patented by American weavers, including the Conger family of weavers from Groton, NY. In addition to flowers, trees, animals and fancy designs, this attachment allowed the weaver to include text. It was common for the weaver to include some combination of the weaver’s name, date, location, recipient’s name, and sometimes patriotic words and phrases.

Coverlets woven by J. M. Davidson date from 1836-1850, but he moved around a bit. He was weaving in Lodi from 1836-1839, in Ovid about 1840 and in Warsaw, Wyoming County, NY about 1850.

The recipient name on a coverlet was usually of a woman. It may have been a gift to a girl when coming of age or perhaps to be put in her hope chest. Maybe this coverlet was a Christmas gift to Elizabeth Reynolds. One wonders how old she was in 1839.

If you have information on who Elizabeth Reynolds was, please contact Marty Schlabach, 315-521-4315 or MLS5@cornell.edu





HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM EVERYONE AT
THE BACKBONE RIDGE HISTORY GROUP!

This month my article will focus on the creation of a Virtual History Tour Application (App) on the Backbone Ridge. Thanks to the Nelson B. Delavan Foundation the Backbone Ridge History Group has received a grant to compile a database of publicly available components of the history of the Backbone Ridge and surrounding area. The database will include information about the landscape prior to settlement, property ownership over time, and the development and in some cases the demise of community institutions and economies with many spin-offs yet to be discovered.

Most importantly, a platform for the database will be created to make it accessible from home based or mobile electronic devices. Imagine hiking on a Backbone Ridge trail or driving on a seasonal road with your smart phone or other device loaded with a GPS locator. You open an App and behold, you have access to the history of the Military Lot that you are on. For example, what is there to know about that cellar hole that I see? We more mature historians without electronic devices may have to hitch a ride.

This will all take time and provide ample opportunity for volunteering to collect, compile and test the database and App, while learning about this important local history. Three programs are planned for 2018 to introduce the concept and provide background historical information on the Military Tract and its placement on the ground.

Spring- Seneca County Historian Walter Gable will present a detailed history of the creation of the Military Tract, the stories behind creating and naming the Military Towns, such as Hector, Ovid and Ulysses, and the lottery system for awarding Military Lots to soldiers for their service during the Revolutionary War. Evidence of the Military Lots still appears in modern deed descriptions.

Summer- Before settlement could begin the Military Towns and Lots within the Military Tract had to be surveyed so the Lots could be identified by settlers. A program is being planned for reenactment of the survey of one or more lines of one of the Military Lots using the original survey notes and period survey equipment. Especially interesting will be the description of the landscape at that time along with the dimensions, reference points and language. Expect to hear the language of metes and bounds including chains, links, rods, roods, perches and poles.

Following a presentation, the program will move to a Military Lot where an actual survey will take place involving participants who want to share the experience and compare the landscape of the late 18th century and today. Hopefully a Lot can be located where at least one of the boundary lines will not have had a road built on it at some point.

Fall- As stated above, the product of this project will be a platform for historical information organized by Military Lot and accessible from home or in the field. By fall a sample of at least one Military Lot will be ready for demonstration and will be the subject of a presentation and hopefully another field trip.

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BY ALLAN BUDDLE
(continued from page 2)

Private ownership of the Military Lots on the Backbone Ridge began with a land grant to a Revolutionary Soldier for his service and ended for portions of some Lots, 150 years more or less later, when the Federal Resettlement Administration acquired about 175 parcels and relocated owners from the land. Many land transactions took place during that 150 year time period as lands were bought and sold. Imagine receiving title to 600 acres of completely wooded land weeks travel time from home, with nothing but an axe and a yoke of oxen to clear and begin farming it, and to build a home. Because of the time elapsed between the end of the War and the award of Military Lots, most of the soldiers had settled elsewhere and started families. In those cases lands were usually sold to speculators who subdivided the lands into more manageable sizes and sold those smaller parcels to settlers eager to go west.

Below is a very small sample of the first and last owners of two of the Military Lots. Portions of some of the Military Lots are still in private ownership.

Ovid Military Lot 91

Lot 91 Awarded to John English (died May 1, 1788)(4th Regiment of Sackett's Company)
Patent Delivered to Henry Platner for Killian Hogeboom.

Portions of Lot 91 Acquired by the Resettlement Administration on the date shown.

Jenni M. Bartholomew	08/17/1939
Ernest Parmerter	01/16/1941
L. Case Hunt	11/27/1940
Ernest D. Parmerter	10/09/1939
Mary C. Brokaw	01/10/1941

Hector Military Lot 34

Lot 34 Awarded to Jacob Blarr (died January, 1779)(1st Regiment of Fink's Company)
Patent Delivered to- Richard Edwards, Administrator.

Portions of Lot 34 Acquired by the Resettlement Administration on the date shown.

James P. Hawes	03/18/1941
Henry Creighton	03/18/1941
Walter Shriner	02/17/1937
Carolyn Egbert	12/16/1936
Arthur M. Houseworth	08/21/1936
Ellsworth Fenton	10/21/1936
Carrie E. Swick	06/15/1937
Walter Shriner	04/02/1937
Arthur C. Auble	07/14/1937

References:

The Balloting Book and other Documents relating to Military Bounty Lands in the State of New York. Printed by Packard & VanBenthuyzen, Albany, 1825, Reprinted by W. E. Morrison & Co., Ovid, 1983.
History of Property Acquisition on FLNF under the Bankhead Jones Act of 1937. (Map)
1874 Atlas of the Town of Lodi showing the Ovid Military Town Lots.
1874 Atlas of the Town of Hector showing the Hector Military Town Lots.

Editor's Note: See pages 6 and 7 for a map of the military lot numbers mentioned above.

LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO



Editor's Note- A call from Judy Barkee, a Seely Family descendent searching for the location of the Seely Cemetery led to the discovery of the November, 2017, Mystery Photo and a wonderful historical article. Judy's mother who was the family genealogist had never been able to locate the Seely Cemetery. Local historian Doris Pike located the owners of the cemetery which led to a rather difficult climb in and out of a gulley along the creek that leads to Hector Falls on the John Walsh property. Fortunately, Judy, her husband Douglas, Allan and Mr. Walsh were all sure footed and did not slip into the gulley. We all thank Mr. Walsh for his hospitality, leading the tour and providing walking sticks for everyone.

This silver trophy was awarded in 1823 to someone in the Backbone Ridge Area. The answer is embedded in a story that was taken from a booklet named: "*Burdett From The Beginning, 1779 to 1984*", published by the Ladies Wednesday Afternoon Club of Burdett, March, 1984.

The identifying paragraph in the story with reference follows:

Samuel Seely, with John Orsborne (or Osborne), built the "Mary and Hannah", the first boat to reach the port of New York traveling the western canal from Hector Falls. The 70-ton boat was made entirely from Hector hills wood prepared at the Hector Falls mill operated by Seely. Her sails and rigging were made at the home of her owners. The trip was made in 1823. The vessel carried 800 bushels of wheat, three tons of butter and four barrels of beans.

Reference: "Silver Trophy, Long Sought, Discovered in an Exhibition" by Barbara Bell, Ithaca Journal Feature Story, May 13, 1965.

Schuyler County Historian Gary Emerson provided a copy of the photo that Barbara Bell took of the silver trophy in the exhibition for use as the Mystery Photo. Along with the photo Gary provided the following:

I have heard of the Mary and Hannah! It was the first boat to travel the Erie Canal from the "west" and reach NYC with a cargo. They had to take the mast down so it could go through the canal and pass under bridges. The boatmen were feted with a big dinner and awarded an engraved silver cup, and the boat left from Hector Falls! The silver cup is housed today in the Albany Institute of Art.

The entire and very interesting historical article follows:

Early Cemeteries by Jean Argetsinger

There are three cemeteries in Burdett no longer used for burial that record the pioneers of this area. The oldest of these is the cemetery on the hill above Hector Falls on the western border of the village. It is sometimes referred to as the Seely Cemetery. This was the burial ground used by the residents of Hamburg, the settlement at Hector Falls Point. Hamburg, possibly named for the famous international German port, was deserted in 1857 when a fire destroyed its buildings. The residents moved up the hill to the growing village of Burdett. Interesting to note, at that time Hector Falls was sometimes referred to as Factory Falls.

All the stones in the deserted cemetery are slate. Many are beautifully engraved, signed by a stone cutter, J. Sutton, an itinerate artist of the trade.

(Visit the Backbone Ridge website www.backboneridgehistorygroup.com, click on the Pictures page and see a slide show of the stones in the cemetery. The photos were gathered by Kari Milliman Gauntt during a visit with William Fenton, to many old family cemeteries in the Town of Hector. Daniel Huston created the slide show from the photos and placed it on the BRHG website.)

One of these stones tells a story:

Memory of Bezaleel Seely who died in the 77th year of his life.

He emigrated with his family to the western wilds in 1787. Settled in Tioga County, NY. Hence made choice
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LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

of this Lot No. 69 in Hector for his residence in preference to any in the country. And did many years before his death made choice of this spot for the interment of his family.

In order to understand Bezaleel's tombstone inscription is to remember the Town of Hector, formed in 1802, was first part of Tioga County before it became part of Tompkins County in 1822, before it became part of Schuyler County in 1854.

Bezaleel Seely established a cloth mill in 1801 at the Hecctor Falls Point community and a little later, 1805 with his son Samuel, started operation of a log grist mill. Hamburg flourished. It had three mills, the cloth mill, a saw mill, a flour mill, also a boat yard, a cooper shop and a blacksmith shop. There was a long row of small shops in which the hatter, the shoemaker, the harnessmaker, and other craftsmen plied their trades. Bezaleel's son John ran a general store where farmers could sell or barter their products and buy supplies. There was an Inn where, in 1807, Thomas Coon, a hatmaker, put up for the night. This Inn became a stagecoach tavern with stables and hitching shed. Samuel Seely was to run the Inn as well as manage the stagecoach route between Hector Falls and Geneva.

In addition to Bezaleel's grave there is the grave of his son John who died in 1812 at the age of 34 years. Also, Bezaleel's wife Zerviah, who died in 1816 aged 75 years, Samuel Seely's first wife Rebeccah, "the third daughter of General Reuben Hopkins, Orange County", died in 1816 at the age of 35 years. Beside her stone is a stone that relates to the history of her children: Joseph, who died at three months; Stephen who died at three weeks, and Harriet who died at one year. After Rebeccah died, Samuel married Hannah. Their son Jonas who died in 1821 at the age of 18 months, is also buried here.

There are about 25 graves here. There are graves of other families. A small stone bears the name of J. Smelser, a native of Ireland who died June 15, 1819. He was engaged in laying out the roads from Hector Falls to the head of the lake when he became ill and died at the age of 29. A tragic postscript is the stone of his son Reuben, who died two months later, August 15, at the age of four years.

Samuel Seely, with John Orsborne (or Osborne), built the "Mary and Hannah", the first boat to reach the port of New York traveling he western canal from Hector Falls. The 70-ton boat was made entirely from Hector hills wood prepared at the Hector Falls mill operated by Seely. Her sails and rigging were made at the home of her owners. The trip was made in 1823. The vessel carried 800 bushels of wheat, three tons of butter and four barrels of beans.

This cemetery is located on land now owned by Martha and John Walsh, once part of the Lathrop farm; hence the name Lathrop Cemetery in some historical reports. A wide path existed along Hector Falls creek from the Hamburg settlement at Hector Point to the cemetery.

Standing in the cemetery, one can appreciate Bezaleel's choice. There is a breathtaking view of Seneca Lake from the cemetery but is alas, rapidly becoming a small forest of trees.

Much more accessible is the cemetery in the rear of the Presbyterian Church. This was an established burial ground for the community before 1826. The story of a soldier returning from the War of 1812 helped clear the land east of the church site and his was the first burial in the cemetery. There are a large number of slate stones which have no inscription.

Three soldiers of the Revolutionary War, pioneers of Burdett, Captain Jonathan Owen, Timothy Owen and Joseph Gillespie, are buried there with other pioneers. To wander through the cemetery is an interesting lesson in history.

The small cemetery in back of the former Old School Baptist Church was used from 1840 to the turn of the century for burial of members of the congregation. It too, is easily accessible. Waller O'Grady, who lives in the adjoining house, keeps the cemetery in good condition. The cemetery belongs to the village.

References:

"Silver Trophy, Long Sought, Discovered in an Exhibition" by Barbara Bell, Ithaca Journal Feature Story, May 13, 1965.

"Historical and Biographical Reminiscence's of Schuyler by John Corbett", published in the Watkins Express, beginning in 1889.

"The Builder of the Western Wild", by Frank Severne, in the Watkins Express, 1956.

Watkins Express, May 17, May 24, 1894.

THIS MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO

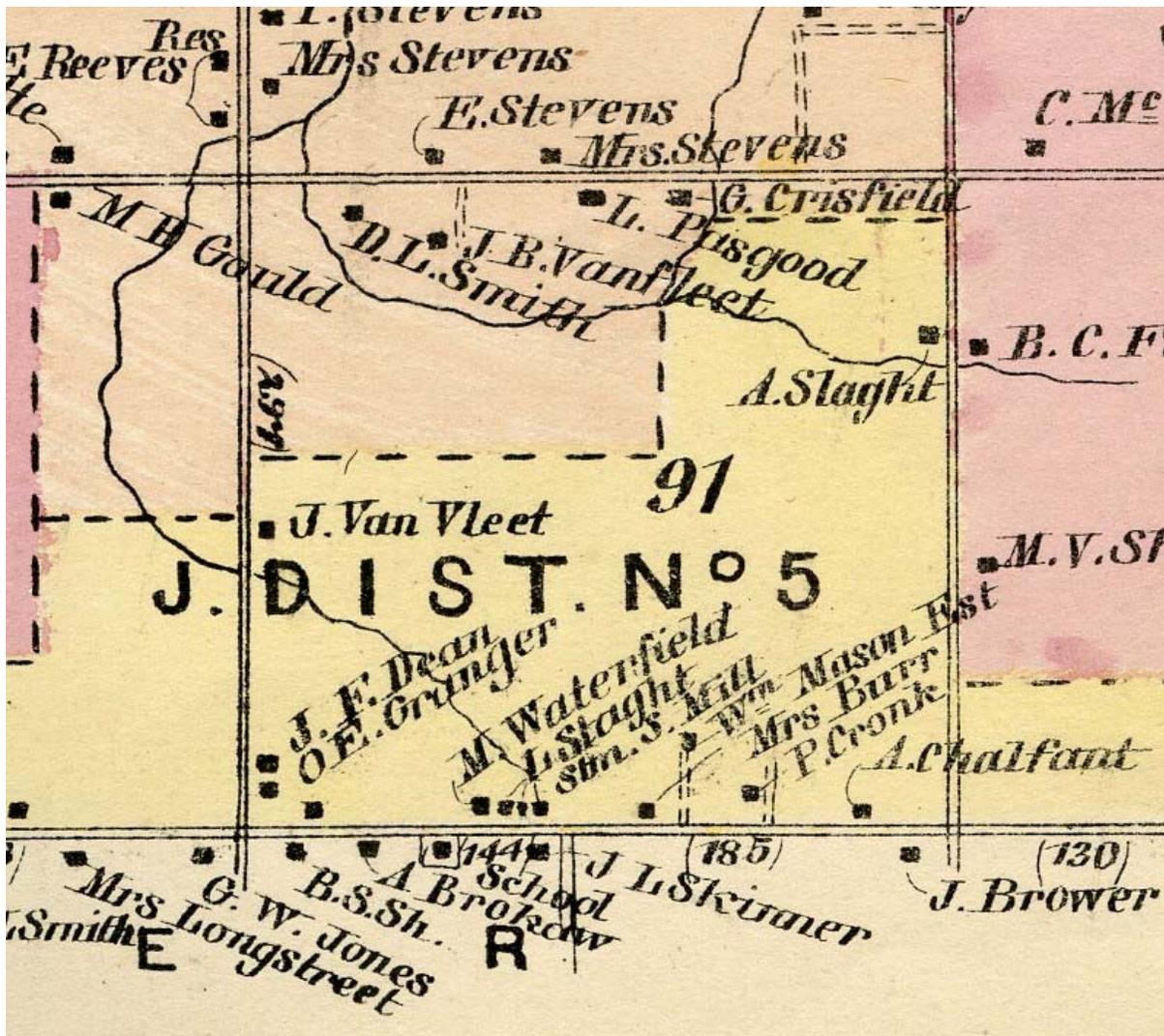


Can you identify this person and his important connection to the Backbone Ridge?



MILITARY LOT 91—LODI

SOURCE: 1874 ATLAS OF THE TOWN OF LODI SHOWING THE OVID MILITARY TOWN LOTS.



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The next issue of the "Backbone" will include an updated listing of Trustees and Officers following the Annual Membership Meeting in November and Trustee Meeting in January. Also included will be a change in the frequency and location of Trustee Meetings.

WWW.BACKBONERIDGEHISTORYGROUP.COM

We hope that information contained in the Backbone continues to be of interest and we welcome suggestions for content related to the history of the Backbone Ridge and surrounding communities. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions or contributions of articles by mail at the address above or through the website at that address above.

For new or renewal memberships, for an individual or household please send \$10 to BRHG, PO Box 62, Trumansburg, NY 14886

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