



# The Backbone

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

B E C A U S E   H I S T O R Y   M A T T E R S

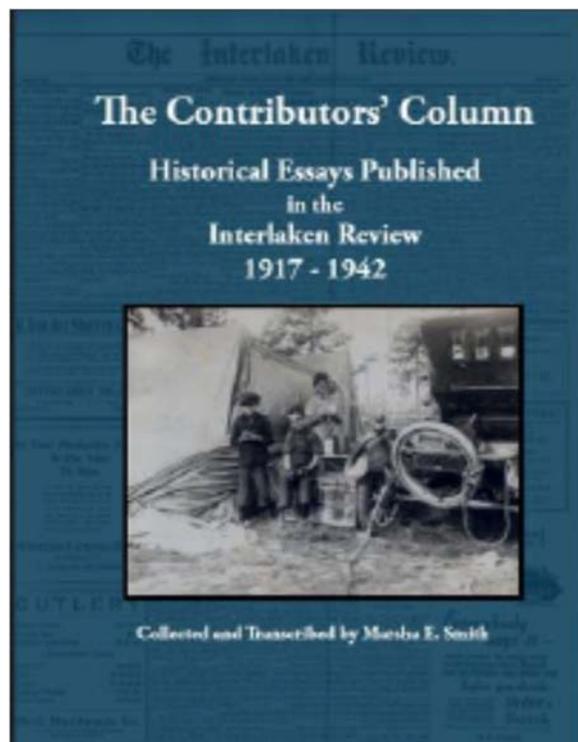
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Announcing  
*The Contributors' Column*  
*Historical Essays Published*  
*in the*  
*Interlaken Review*  
 1917 - 1942

It is with great pleasure that the Backbone Ridge History Group, with assistance from the Nelson B. Delavan Foundation, is presenting this wonderful collection of columns which originally appeared in the weekly paper and subsequently copied on microfilm. For a period of about 20 years, Marsha E. Smith formerly of the Towns of Covert and Hector, copied those columns and transcribed them. In the Introduction, by Marsha which follows, and in the Preface written by the editor of the Interlaken Review from 2008 to 2016, you get a sense of the historical significance of this book as life in the times both locally and nationally are presented.

To order this 125 page book from the Backbone Ridge History Group please contact us at PO Box 62, Trumansburg, New York, 14886 or 607 532 4213 or [orchardland@zoom-dsl.com](mailto:orchardland@zoom-dsl.com). The price will include the book for \$25.00 plus postage. An invoice will be mailed with the book.

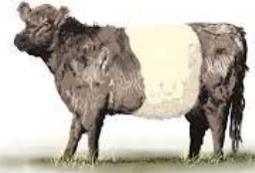


BY ALLAN BUDDLE

Although it is far from complete, we are pleased that recovery from Hurricane Harvey which devastated Houston and other areas, is sufficiently advanced so that this issue of the *Backbone* is now in your hands.

Several activities have occurred on which we would like to report.

*The View from the Hector Backbone, Reflecting on the History of American Agriculture*, was presented by Dr. LouAnn Wurst on a rainy July 1<sup>st</sup>. About fifty people came to the Logan Community Center to hear LouAnn's most recent paper. The paper summarized and provided LouAnn's interpretation of the results of twelve years of historical research and the material culture gathered from twelve summers of archaeological excavations on twenty two former farms and one country school at the south end of the Backbone Ridge. They all became vacant and the buildings removed in the 1930s and 40s as a result of the Federal Resettlement Administration, a program of the New Deal.



The photo, at left, of LouAnn making her presentation demonstrates the enthusiasm that she has for this Backbone Ridge historical archaeology project. The 200,000 plus or minus artifacts that were gathered are now stored someplace on the Finger Lakes National Forest where they will be available for future interpretation although a procedure for that to happen has not yet been developed.

On September 30<sup>th</sup> Gary Emerson presented a very informative program on the Civilian Conservation Corps in Schuyler County. There were four camps in Schuyler County. The camp with the greatest connection to the Backbone Ridge was located on Church St. just outside of the Village of Burdett. It was opened in November of 1939 and was special because it was administered through the Soil Conservation Service. The CCC men helped the remaining local farmers terrace their land to prevent erosion, they dug diversion ditches and put in earthen dams to slow up water runoff. Residents of this camp were very active in clearing brush from the farms that had been purchased through the efforts of the Resettlement Administration and from which all of the buildings

had been burned, bulldozed or relocated. Following removal of plants such as gooseberry and current bushes, which hosted the white pine rust which was detrimental to pine trees, the men planted a lot of trees on those lands that had been cleared of farmsteads on the Backbone Ridge. This camp was closed in 1941.



**INTRODUCTION**  
*The Contributors' Column*  
*Historical Essays Published in the Interlaken Review*  
 1917 - 1942  
 BY MARSHA SMITH



*Front row: Emma Smith Cole (L) and Diademina Smith (R). Back row: Herman T. Smith and John W. Smith. Taken before 1917. Photo in possession of Marsha E. Smith*

As a child growing up, I would ask my dad where we came from. His usual response was "Newfield." Newfield is a small village outside Ithaca, nearby. His response never satisfied me and I would exclaim, "No!!! Before that?" He would respond at this point with "New Jersey" and thus our conversation ended. When I was quite young I remember being out in a shed on my Uncle Frank's property. Dad and Uncle Frank were talking tractors which was extremely boring for us kids. They could talk about tractors and machinery for hours it seemed. Suddenly Daddy took me by the hand and lead me to a spot in the barn, where you could pull in with a tractor and pointed up into the rafters. He said, "See that?" I nodded yes. He went on to tell me, "That is the side of the wagon in which the Smith's moved up from New Jersey." I never forgot the moment. In 1990, I became interested in learning more about the Smith Family.

Herman T. Smith (1864-1944) was born in the Town of Covert, Seneca County, New York. He was the son of John Towne Smith and Margaret Gilmore, his father's second wife. John T. Smith was first married to Emeline Cole, daughter of David and Rachel Townsend Cole, and had six children with her; namely: David C. Smith, Gilbert C. Smith, Delos H. Smith, Wilbur F. Smith, and Athena Smith. Emeline died in 1848 and John T. Smith married Margaret Gilmore and had an additional four children: Emeline Smith, Diademina Smith, John W. Smith, and Herman T. Smith. John T. Smith died in 1865 when Herman was about seven months old. Herman remained in the Town of Covert for most of his life while all of his half-brothers and half-sister headed for "points West or South."

(continued on page 8)

## MAIL BAG



*We received this wonderful letter from Steven Meier regarding his visit to the Strader Cemetery:*

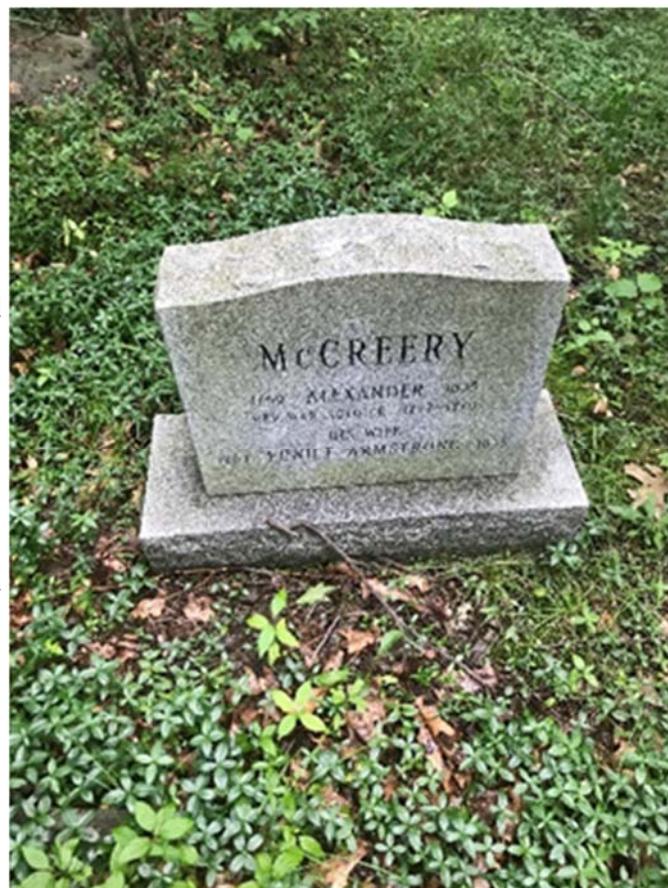
In July of 2017, I visited Strader Cemetery near the intersection of Logan Road and Covert Road in Burdett to see the resting place of my ancestors Alexander and Eunice McCreery. Alexander McCreery was born in 1760 in Little Britain, New Windsor Town, NY, fought in the American Revolution in the militia in NY, and died in Hector Town in 1838. Eunice Armstrong McCreery was born in 1764, married Alexander in 1783 in Goshen, NY, and died in Hector Town in 1836. To the best of my knowledge, I am the first member of my extended family to visit Strader Cemetery since 1974. I am originally from Oklahoma, but moved to New Jersey for my work. Reflecting upon family stories passed on to me by my grandfather Harold McCreery (born in Oklahoma in 1927 and died in Oklahoma in 2011) and seeing the geographical proximity of New Jersey to Schuyler County, I decided to attempt to find the cemetery as we passed through the area on a recent summer vacation trip. After my visit, I am eager to learn more about the history and upkeep of the cemetery as well as family history from their time in and around Hector Town.

I have a copy of a family history book that I used as my starting point when I set out to find Strader Cemetery. The book, "A Historical, Genealogical, and Biographical Record of Some of the Members of the Alexander McCreery Clan of the United States and Canada", was written by my grandfather's uncle, William McCreery (born in Oklahoma in 1898 and died in California in 1983), in the 1970s. In this book, William McCreery tells how he traced the family to Hector Town and the Village of Burdett. He also mentions, with gratitude, the community members who helped him along the way. As William McCreery and his wife Laura did their research leading up to the book's completion in 1976, they were assisted by members of the Hector Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Paul Adams helped them find out that Alexander was an Elder of the Hector Presbyterian Church shortly after it was founded. Robert Gehr located Alexander McCreery's grave and headstone in Strader Cemetery. Larry Miller of Burdett spent hours surveying and plotting the burial place of the McCreery family in the cemetery in 1974. At the time, the land that included Strader Cemetery was owned by Larry Miller's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. F. G. Sherman.

More than forty years after William McCreery's visit to Hector, I started planning my visit. I started by sending an email to Julie Morris of the Schuyler County Historical Society. She shared information with me that she obtained from the Town of Hector and the Schuyler County Real Property offices. This information described the general location of the cemetery. I found out that I should be able to find access via a right of way. There was no noted caretaker.

I also looked up Alexander McCreery on FindAGrave.com. My search showed that a modern marker was in place for Alexander and Eunice McCreery. Questions came to mind. Who placed this relatively new marker? Was it a local resident? Was it my grandfather's uncle? Was it the relatives from Michigan who accompanied him on the visit in the 1970s? A distant relative?

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When my family and I arrived at the intersection of Logan Road and Covert Road, I was very fortunate to meet two gentlemen who resided nearby and instructed me on how I could find the precise location of the cemetery, that it was surrounded by a chain link fence, and that there were some new markers. I did not get their names, unfortunately. We drove up Covert Road to the location. I found the chain link fence in a deeply wooded, elevated area and saw the modern headstone of Alexander and Eunice McCreery. On the back of the headstone is a listing of four of Alexander and Eunice McCreery's children who are also buried in the cemetery. I found the original markers for the McCreery's stacked and piled around a tree. I carefully inspected



each marker to read the names and information, but left them as I found them. The cemetery was filled with trees, consistent with the description in the book from the 1970s and Julie Morris's notes from the 1990s.

My visit to Strader Cemetery has also led to new questions for me about the lives of my ancestors in this region. It appears that Alexander and Eunice McCreery's oldest daughter Margaret married Nathan Brown. The Brown family plot lies next to the McCreery's. Nathan Brown's marker is shown in a slideshow on the Backbone Ridge History Group website.

I am descended from Alexander and Eunice McCreery's third child, Joseph

McCreery. Joseph married Abigail Collver in Hector Town in 1811. Abigail was the daughter of Phineas and Phebe (Breese) Collver and the granddaughter of John and Hannah Breese, one of the first families to settle near Elmira and Horseheads. (Like Alexander McCreery, John Breese also fought in the American Revolution.) Joseph McCreery and his family eventually made their way to Michigan. One of his grandsons, Clarence Abraham McCreery, settled in Oklahoma in 1893.

After our trip, I contacted the individual, O. Culver, who had posted the picture of the modern marker for Alexander and Eunice McCreery on FindAGrave.com. They did not have further information, but recommended I contact your group, the Backbone Ridge History Group. I am very grateful for the assistance I have received from discussions with Julie Morris of the Schuyler County Historical Society, the two gentlemen that happened to be outside that July day near Covert Road and Logan Road, Sandra Bradford the Town of Hector Historian, and Allan Buddle of the Backbone Ridge History Group. I am interested in any information related to Strader Cemetery, its history, and its upkeep. I am also interested in learning more about the McCreery, Collver, and Breese families in the area.

Thank you to the Backbone Ridge History Group for the work that you do to preserve the history of your region.

Steven Meier  
swmeier@gmail.com

*Editors Note: If you can assist Steven, please contact him directly at his e-mail address above or contact the Backbone Ridge History Group through our website and we will forward the message to him.*

## BACKBONE RIDGE HISTORY GROUP'S ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Each year, usually in October, the Membership meets to elect returning trustees and new trustees and to act on proposals for changes in the By-Laws of the organization. The meeting was postponed until November this year so that it could be announced in the *Backbone* for those who would like to attend. The meeting will be held on November 20, 2017, at 3 PM at the BRHG Research Center at the intersection of 96A and 414 in Lodi, NY.

This year there are four nominees to replace three trustees who have had to resign and to fill one vacancy. We want to thank the following who have been dedicated to the work of the Backbone Ridge History Group but have had to step aside. They are Doris Pike, Gerard Messmer and Charlotte Dickens. Doris who was Vice President last year and Charlotte will continue as committee members. We sincerely thank them all for their past dedication and service.

Candidates for election to the Board of Directors as Trustees are: Julie Morris, Harold Bush, Samantha Solveson and Joe Chicone and Renee Baum sharing a trustee position. Their biographies are below.

### Julie Morris:

I have experience with accessions and file maker, archive storage, working with schools and educational programs, and I'm very interested in the oral history collection. Plus, I enjoy old cemeteries. I've been the director at the Brick Tavern Museum since March 2016 and before that a volunteer. I have a master's degree in education with a focus on literacy. I have worked at Olin Library at Cornell University in conservation, co-owned a commercial real estate business, kept books for a Native American business - Ongweoweh in Ithaca, and taught school pre-k, first grade, and 5th grade. I am a wife, mother, and daughter and enjoy time with my family.

### Harold Bush:

I was born in 1953, parents - William Bush ( many ancestors from Bennetsburg), Dora E. Dean (Reynoldsville Deans, Paul, and Reva Landon Dean). My ancestors are from Backbone Ridge. I grew up in Enfield, but spent a lot of time in Reynoldsville, and many of my ancestors are buried in Reynoldsville Cemetery.

### Samantha Solveson:

I grew up for some of my earlier years in a small town in North Carolina. Then I moved up here to this lovely small town of Lodi, where I found my husband, and we are now happily married. I am very good at singing and dancing, and I love to stick my nose in a book to learn. I think I will be a good asset to BRHG, because I love history. I won't be satisfied until I find out the truth about something and get answers to my questions. I also love to sew. I love to study historical costumes.

### Joe Chicone and Renee Baum

Joe Chicone and Renee Baum own Uncle Joe's Saddlery and Forge in Burdette. Joe Chicone has been a professional horseman for over 40 years, as well as a leather worker and blacksmith. Together, they are part of the musical group Uncle Joe and the Rosebud Ramblers, which has played for numerous events on the Backbone Ridge and surrounding area.

A proposal for a By-Law change will be presented that will reduce the frequency of trustee meetings from monthly to quarterly. Current and incoming trustees all have very busy schedules beyond their responsibilities with the Backbone Ridge History Group. To offset this reduction in frequency of trustee meetings, committees will independently carry out the activities of the BRHG with their own schedules while reporting back to the Board of Directors quarterly. Committee work will involve both trustees and others with specialized interest.

## LAST MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO

In the June, 2017 issue of the *Backbone* there was a picture of a sapling with a very interesting and colorful bark. The picture was taken several years ago near a trail in the vicinity of Teeter Pond on the Finger Lakes National Forest, on the south side of West Seneca Road. An inspection of the 1874 Map of the Town of Hector, reveals that the farmstead nearest where the sapling was found belonged to Bell and Fax Families on Joint School District No. 5 on Hector Military Lot 5. Further research shows that Hector Military Lot 5 was granted to Hugh Fothergill for his service as a Private in the American Revolution. He served in the Seventh Company of the First Regiment. His Patent of 600 acres was delivered to Abraham Jones. Records in the Seneca County Clerk's office show several subsequent transactions four of which involve a George Fothergill as follows:



GEORGE FOTHERGILL of Camillus to JACOB CHANDLER  
12/16/1806 (Book B, page 328)

GEORGE FOTHERGILL of Camillus to JACOB CHANDLER  
12/10/1807, 25 acres, \$87 (Book D, page 505)

GEORGE FOTHERGILL of Camillus to WILLIAM JONES 11/2/1808, next to Alexander Hall and James Ray, a blackman (Book C, page 242)

GEORGE FOTHERGILL of Onondaga Co. to JONAH JOHNSTON 9/23/1809, 30 acres, \$58 (Book D, page 175)

Further research in the Deed Books in the County Clerk's office would reveal which portions of Lot 5 would have been the properties transferred. It would also be interesting to research and determine the relationship between Hugh and George Fothergill. Perhaps someone would like to do that research and submit a report for the next issue of the *Backbone*.

Coming back to the Striped Maple, a quick check of THE FIELDBOOK OF NATURAL HISTORY by E. Laurence Palmer, provides the following: "Common in mixed woodland borders or near streams but always in the shade of other trees. ...in country that provides typical cover for moose and deer. Common name goosefoot maple refers to resemblance of leaves to shape of goose's foot. .... Twigs furnish a favored browse for deer and moose and give plant the name of moosewood."

## THIS MONTH'S MYSTERY PHOTO



**This trophy was awarded in 1823  
to someone in the Backbone Ridge area.**

**Do you know what it was for?**

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*1917 - 1942*  
BY MARSHA SMITH  
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

We had several old diaries which my grandfather and his brother, John W. Smith, and his sister, Diademina Smith, kept. In Uncle John's 1874 diary was an entry about the Gilmore Family history, telling us that John Gilmore had come from Ireland, married Rachel Quigley, daughter of Captain Quigley of the Revolutionary War. They lived in Hector and had 16 children, including my great grandmother. All of the children were named in the entry. Since we lived in Hector, we began looking for John Gilmore. We never found him, but we did find the Smiths. I was thrilled to learn that our family was among some of the earliest pioneers of Seneca County. I was able to give something back to my father and Uncle Frank as they did not know much about the family. Their knowledge was fragmented, probably because their grandfather died when their father, Herman, was still an infant.

When you do family history or genealogy, you often end up exploring local history as well. I became fascinated with the old diaries and my grandfather's writings. I found an old Day Book among the diaries and it contained stories. My father and Uncle Frank told me that Herman wrote stories for the newspaper in a column called the Contributors' Column. I found some of the newspaper clippings in an old scrap book. I was captivated by the stories. They brought my grandfather to life for me. It was like I was sitting on his knee and he was telling me about the good ole' days. I decided that I should collect his stories and type them up for the family. Little did I know what I was in for....

In the early 1990's I began collecting the stories. I poured through the microfilm of the Interlaken Review looking for the stories. I knew when some were published as my grandfather mentioned them in his diary. I began finding the stories in about 1917. The early stories tell about the trips that Herman and his friends took as their world opened up for them through the automobile. They took road trips to the South and to New England and wrote about their adventures in the newspaper. They traveled in a Model-T. In 1920 they took the ultimate road trip for the time and drove with several other families in a caravan to Florida. They spent the greater part of the winter there that year. That trip is also chronicled. It is a fascinating read about our country at the time. It also reveals Herman's interesting take on his southern counterparts. It is evident that there was a definite bias based on the Civil War.

Herman also wrote a very long series of articles about the year he spent in Kansas in 1887. He left Seneca County and took a train to Kansas with the intention of moving there to live with his brother, Wilbur F. Smith. He remained there for a year but became homesick and returned to the family farm. This work is a wonderful description of his trip and adventures in the wild west. My dad said that he decided to come home after a man came into the shop that Herman worked in, looking for ammunition. Herman did not have what the man was looking for and the man pulled out his pistol, held it at my grandfather's head and pulled the trigger. Luckily, he had no ammunition. My grandfather took the weapon away from the man and threw him out of the store. At this point, Herman had decided that enough was enough and he came back to New York. He brought the pistol with him. Dad said that he remembered the gun being in the house. I asked him what happened to it and he said that his mother did not like the gun being in the house, so (as Dad put it), she threw it in the "crapper."

In later years, the newspaper provided a column in which people could submit stories, called the Contributors' Column. My grandfather and his friend Charles S. Farr wrote many, many stories about their experiences growing up in southern Seneca County. At times, it seemed as though they were in a story telling contest. While Mr. Farr tended to just share the story, my grandfather tended to embellish the story in a tongue in cheek style which becomes his trade mark. Others also joined in, including Wheeler A. Bassett, Jerusha Bennett, the Gardners, Elmo Porter, among others. While these stories do give us a glimpse of earlier life in Seneca County, we should be aware that they are oral tradition and may contain information which may be

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exaggerated or changed as the story has been passed along. I know for a fact that some of my grandfather's stories are not entirely correct. Knowing this, by no means, detracts from the story, but adds an element of delight to them. Herman also wrote some pretty politically charged stories/articles which turn out to almost be prophetic. I have found them to be just as interesting as it informs the reader of the mind set of many old farmers in the area back in the 1930's and early 1940's.

I have worked on this project for about 20 years. After my father died in 1994, I put it aside. I found it difficult to do as I missed him so much. In 1998, I returned to Washington State. I had the foresight to finish collecting the stories before I left the Finger Lakes. I worked on the stories here and there but never with the fervor and dedication I had before my dad died. In 2014 I retired and have since found the time and energy to complete the transcriptions. For the most part, I have transcribed the stories exactly as I found them, retaining the spelling and grammar as they were written. I have taken the liberty of making an occasional correction in order to make the story easier to read. Sometimes the error was on the part of the newspaper as opposed to the author of the piece. I am delighted to have the opportunity to share these with you and hope that you will enjoy the stories as much as I have. ---Marsha E. Smith

Our exhibit at the 2017 Trumansburg Fair.

**Work and Play on the Hector Backbone**



## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE



### SHARRON RICCI SEARCHING FOR ASSISTANCE IN IDENTIFYING FAMILY MEMBERS AND THEIR FRIENDS

Every spring and fall Mark and Sharon Ricci come from Ohio to help with cleanup and maintenance of the Reynoldsville Cemetery. Prior to the time when the Backbone Ridge History Group started working on the Reynoldsville Cemetery, Sharon and Mark came annually or more often to care for the Dates Family grave stones. Now they have extended that effort to the whole cemetery. Sharon provided the photos above in hopes that someone can help identify some of the people in the photos. She also provided the following information.

The photos above have my grandparents pictured along with people that I believe are related to them. I am fairly certain that the child in the one photo is my mother, Alice Margaret Hyland, but I would like confirmation. My mother was born in November 1906. I think the child in the photo looks to be 3 or 4 years old. That would mean the photos were taken around 1909-1910. My grandparents are on the far left (my grandfather is wearing the bow tie). I do not know exactly who the other adults are. A cousin has told me that he believes the woman standing next to my grandmother is Alice Dates Hyland. Next to her is Nora Dates Shear. Between the last woman on the right and the younger man is Joe Hyland. The photos were taken at my grandparents' farm on route 89 (current address is 7371 Rte 89). That road used to be called Cayuga Lake Blvd. The barn in the picture burned down. A smaller barn was built in its place with a Gambrel type metal roof.

George and Susie Myer owned the farm just north of my grandparents' farm on the west side of the road. Harry and Maude Blew owned the farm to the south of my grandparents on the same side of the road (east side). These neighbors probably arrived after my grandparents moved there. The house was built in the 1880's.....I think my grandparents bought the house and farmland around the early 1900s.

My grandparents were Thomas Hyland (1871-1940) and Jennie (Dates) Hyland (1881-1967). Her parents were George (1839-1897) and Salina Dates (1846-1928) and are buried in the Reynoldsville cemetery. George served as a Union soldier during the Civil War. I believe my grandmother's parents were Samuel and Tryphena Dates – also buried in the Reynoldsville cemetery. My mother was Alice Margaret Hyland (1906-1994) and she was married to my father Wesley S. Eva (1907-1998). My mother's brother and his wife, Ralph and Ruth Hyland, also lived in the farmhouse for many years. As another reference, my mother was also related to the Stilwell families (I recall her speaking of Irv and Mary Stilwell....there were others but I have lost them in my memory. I know other cousins were Ellen (Kenneth) Harrison (Trumansburg) and Ruth Maguire (Ithaca).

If you can help, please contact Sharon at [maronricci@windstream.net](mailto:maronricci@windstream.net).

Sharon's husband Mark has researched the Civil War Battles that George N. Dates fought in and that information will be added to the Backbone Ridge History Group website.  
[www.backboneridgehistorygroup.com](http://www.backboneridgehistorygroup.com)

**Backbone Ridge History Group**  
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**Trustees:**

Sandra Bradford, David Smith, Rose Smith, Charlotte Dickens, Gerard Messmer, Mark Brown, Maria Kennedy

**Officers:**

Allan Buddle, President; Doris Pike, Vice President; David Townsend, Secretary; Erica Townsend, Treasurer. Newsletter Designer/Editor, Kari Milliman Gauntt; Daniel Huston, Webmaster

Trustee meetings are held at the Backbone Ridge History Research Center at the intersection of Route 96A and 414 in the Village of Lodi at 3 PM on the third Monday of each month preceded on the same day at 1 PM with a work session.

[WWW.BACKBONERIDGEHISTORYGROUP.COM](http://WWW.BACKBONERIDGEHISTORYGROUP.COM)

**Printing of this newsletter was supported by the Nelson B. Delavan Foundation.**

**Please note the information on the mailing label regarding your membership status. Thank you to those who have renewed! 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**

Part of the Trumansburg Fair exhibit:



Maria Kennedy introducing Gary Emerson, guest speaker, Civilian Conservation Corp Program held on September 20, 2017.

