The Backbone

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

BECAUSE HISTORY MATTERS

Reynoldsville since 1879
by
Nancy Combs

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Welcome Spring

Reynoldsville, a Hamlet in the Town of Hector, was named for the Reynolds Family in the early 1800's. Through the early 1900's there were three to four country stores, two blacksmith shops, a fruit evaporator, the central hotel, sawmills and Stoughton's Hall which was used for meetings, caucuses, social events and voting. There was a shoe shop, Methodist Church and a one-room school house. (School District No. 11).

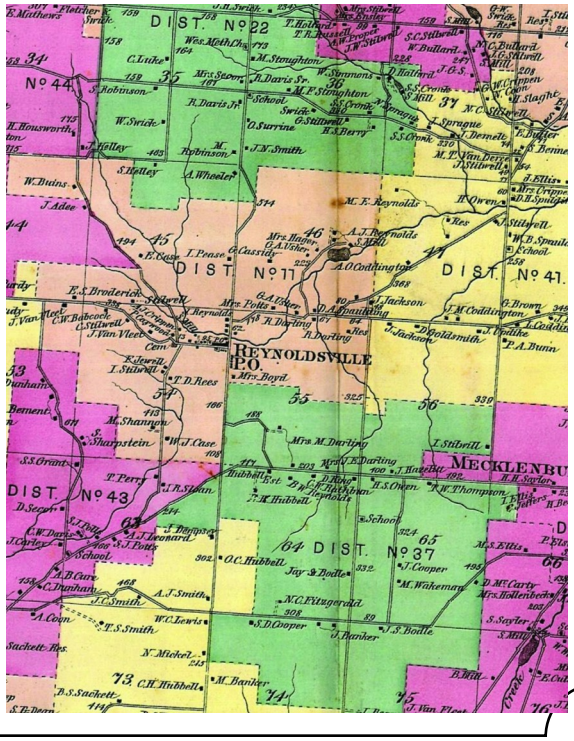
One by one, businesses closed. The Post Office which opened in 1827 with James Reynolds as the Postmaster, closed on February 11, 1929. It was last located in the Soules Red and White Store. By the early 1940's only one country store and gas station remained. Soules Red & White closed in the late 1980's. The Town Clerks office was located in the private home of Zina W. Dean. He served as Town Clerk for 38 years retiring in 1955 at the age of 84. Some other Town Clerks who lived near Reynoldsville and served for many years were Margaret Smith and Clyde Johnson.

A concrete highway was poured through our area about 1927. The one-room schoolhouse closed in the early 1950's and is now the Reynoldsville Community Club. A new Town Hall was constructed in 1988 and later dedicated to Grant Taber who was The Town of Hector Supervisor for many years. There are offices in the new building for the Supervisor, Town Clerk, Town Assessors, Town Justices and others. The Hector Highway Barns have been located here for many years and there is now a Recycling Center for the town in the Highway barns.

Reynoldsville is growing again- there are approximately 130 residents and some new homes are being built. There are a few businesses in and around the Hamlet.

The Reynoldsville Methodist Church is very active and they still have the popular roast beef dinner on Election Day which dates back many, many years. The old Reynoldsville Cemetery, with ground cover of lily of the valley and myrtle, was incorporated on October 26, 1874. There are Civil War Veterans buried here. It was later abandoned after the deaths of the Directors many years ago. There are attempts at this time being made to eliminate the dead trees and brush. It would be nice to bring it to a condition where people who have ancestors buried here could at least visit.

The Community Club is still active, holding an occasional chicken barbecue to raise funds to maintain the building. We were very fortunate to have funds donated to the Club by the late Frances Soule Williams which enabled us to add a beautiful new kitchen, bathroom and the installation of central heat. Reynoldsville is a very pleasant place to reside.



President's Update

By Allan Buddle

Happy spring! The signs are here at last- the snow banks are getting smaller, the geese, robins and red-winged blackbirds are back and several flocks of turkeys have been spotted with the toms sporting their tail feathers.

During the winter the trustees have been busy making plans for 2015. Three programs are in process- *The History of Reynoldsville* plus a presentation on the old gravestone carvers on April 25th at the Reynoldsville Community Club, *Haying the Old Way* in a field near Logan in July, and *Farming and Shipping along the Backbone* in the fall.

We will return to the Reynoldsville Cemetery for another weekend cleanup and restoration on May 15 and 16. The location and timing of the fall cemetery weekend is still being discussed.

A trail-riding group is being assisted in the gathering of information related to the families along the trail. These families were removed from the Backbone during the Great Depression. Old maps, deeds, census and other data sources, in addition to remaining building foundations, provide many clues as do interviews with individuals who were connected in some way with those folks. Additional interviews are planned throughout the year.

This is the first of four 2015 editions of the *Backbone.* At any time that anyone comes across an old newspaper article, letter or photo, or wants to write an article that relates to any aspect of life on the Backbone, we would be pleased to hear from you about including it in the newsletter.

Repair and maintenance of the building in Lodi that will be used as a Research Center will continue throughout the summer. As that project progresses we may send a letter to members asking for some volunteer assistance with cleaning, painting and handyman type work. If you would like to help, please contact Gerry Messmer at 607 387 9669 or e-mail mandg9669@zoom-dsl.com.

I also want to call your attention to a recent paper written by Dr. LouAnn Wurst and her associate Christine Ridarsky. LouAnn has been excavating Backbone farmsteads and researching the related family histories for a dozen years. The Abstract follows. If you would like to access an electronic copy of the paper, LouAnn's e-mail address is louann.wurst@wmich.edu.

Archaeological Reflections on the New Deal

Many connections have been made between the Great Depression and the current crisis in Neoliberal capitalism, and many solutions proposed by the Left hearken to FDR's New Deal programs. While New Deal policies had real benefits, assuming that they were uniformly beneficial to all lower class individuals is short-sighted. This is clear from the vantage point of our research in the Finger Lakes National Forest. The New Deal's Resettlement Administration purchased these farms when implementing land-planning policies to move farmers off "sub-marginal" land to save families "stranded on sub-marginal farms." Our research demonstrates that governmental land-use programs saved some farms by sacrificing others. This case makes it clear that solving current crises needs more that nostalgic yearning for a mythic past. Solutions must come from a thorough examination of the "real concrete" past, not simply the past as imagined.

As always, we hope you have a great summer. Keep us in mind if you run across any historical information related in any way to the Backbone Ridge. I can be reached at 607 532 4213 or e-mail orchardland@zoom-dsl.com.

The photograph at the left is from a cemetery clean-up effort a few years ago - we would love your help this May!

Please consider coming out to help. It's a very rewarding task and we look forward to it each year.

Reynoldsville History

Maps, Stories & Photos of Reynoldsville Then & Now

(Please bring yours to share!)

Presentation includes information on the Joel Reynolds family and stone carver, William Sutton

Tour of the Reynoldsville Cemetery
(time and weather permitting)

WHEN: **Saturday, April 25, 2015**
2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

WHERE: **Reynoldsville Community Club**
Rte. 227, Reynoldsville
(Across from Reynoldsville United Methodist Church)

For More Information Contact:
Doris Pike - 607-546-5533
Allan Buddle - 607-532-4213

BACKBONE RIDGE HISTORY GROUP
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THE POTOMAC ROAD

THE BACKBONE OF THE BACKBONE

BY

MARSHA E. SMITH

Among the many records available for the local history or family history researcher in the Town of Hector is the old Town Meeting Minute Book. This book actually has many records, including some school records, records of chattel mortgages, and the road survey records and petitions. The road records give a fascinating glimpse back to the past. Conventional wisdom tells us that when the earliest settlers came to the area they followed old Native American trails as well as General Sullivan's trail. As more people arrived they needed ways to get from place to place. In the early days they probably had paths from their house to their neighbors, often a friend or relative who moved to the area from the same place they did. Eventually they would need a system of roads which would be under the jurisdiction of the township. These records lay out how and when many of the roads were laid out.

Most of the roads, like today, follow the boundaries of the lots which make up the Town of Hector. Some roads do transverse the lots to accommodate where people lived or to avoid troublesome features such as deep ravines, creeks, steep hills, etc. The descriptions/survey records of these roads tell the reader far more than you would imagine. They mention landmarks, people's homes, old trees, mills etc. I have traced the Potomac Road through the records from Reynoldsville to the county line. When you compare the present day road map with an old plat map from the mid 1800's you will find that some of the road has been smoothed out in places but for the most part, it remains the same. Starting in Reynoldsville, Potomac Road begins in the northeast corner of Lot 54, it transverses the southwest corner of Lot 45, transects a small corner of Lot 44, travels north a bit adjacent to the lot line through Lot 34, where midway through the lot it turns to the east and then follows the boundary lines between Lots 34 and 35, continuing the path north between Lots 24 and 25, Lots 14 and 15, and finally between Lots 5 and 6 where it ends at the Seneca County border. Editors note: an 1874 map of the Reynoldsville area has been provided for you on page one.

The earliest road records pertain primarily to the more major roadways down near the lake or en route to a larger community. The earliest record found for the Potomac Road ***area*** is as follows:

No. 37 Survey of a public highway beginning on the Newtown or Center Road on the west line of No. 55, in hector where the road leading past the house of **Wm. Himrod** leaves the S'd Center road thence N. 55ø E. 8.00, N. 68ø E. 14.50, N. 48ø E. 14.50, N. 53ø E. 8.00, N. 43ø E. 3.00, N. 24ø E. 19.00, North 1.50, N. 52ø E. 20.50, N. 58ø E. 13.00, N. 30ø E. 33.50, to the road leading across lot 47 from **Joel Reynolds** to **Wm. Spaldings**
Recorded 11th October 1811

You can see that the description is quite precise. For the sake of brevity, I will omit some of the detailed descriptions in the surveys to follow. At times there are disputes regarding the roads with alterations made to accommodate people. The original spellings have been retained in these transcriptions.

No. 40 Whereas a public highway a few years since was laid out & Established by the commissioners of Highways of the Town of Hector in the County of Seneca, beginning in the highway that leads from the house of ***Joel Reynolds*** *in S'd Town to the house of* ***William Himrod*** *in the Town aforesaid and about thirty rods* Southerly of the Dwelling house of the aforesaid **Joel**, running from thence an Easterly Direction 'till it Intersects in an acute angle a highway leading from the house of **S'd Joel** to the house of **John Cuddington 2d** in the town aforesaid, and whereas the Said **Joel** Conceives himself Injured in Consequence of the Establishment of the above Said Described Highway and has made Application to us **Cornelius Humfrey, Grover Smith, & O. C. Comstock, three of the Judges of the court of Common pleas** in and for S'd County to adjudge & determine in the premises we therefore on a *** view and Examination of the Same do determine and order that the above described highway be taken up and abolished and that the highway which is laid out and Established by the Commissioners of the Town Aforesaid beginning a little Northerly from the Dwelling house of the **S'd Joel** and in the highway leading from the last mentioned house to the house of **Timothy Scoville** in said Town running from thence an Easterly Direction once near the Division line between lots No. 55 & 46 in Said Town and so on to the Town of Ulysses in Said County be Confirmed and Established.
June 22d 1811 Recorded by S. D. Hubbell T. Clk Cornelius Humfrey Grover Smith O. C. Comstock Judges

No. 58. Survey of a public Highway beginning on the east line of Lot No. 54 about 1 Chain North of **Joel Reynolds** barn, [running north and west] to its intersection with the east and west road on the N. line of Lot No. 44. Recorded March 10th 1815

No. 65. Survey of a public Highway beginning at the highway between Lots No. 45 and 54 20 chains west of Southeast corner of 45 thence [north and west] to a road running from **Timothy Scovilles to Joel Reynolds**. Recorded Jan'y 10th 1817.

No. 98. An alteration in a road beginning at a yellow pine Tree in the old road near **Nehemiah Hodges**, on Lot No. 54, running [north and west] along said line to intersect the old road near the S. E. corner of **Robert Hotchkiss'** land on Lot No. 44. June 17th 1820. Recorded March 28th 1821

(continued on page 5)

The Potomac Road, The Backbone of the Backbone
By Marsha Smith
(continued from page 4)

No. 129. Courses and distances of an alteration in the road leading from **Ira Reynolds** past **Timothy Scovills**, to wit, Beginning in the highway two rods east of the N. E. corner of said Scovills [ ] thence S. 34ø E. 20.00, thence S. 40ø E. [ ] its intersection with the old rout[ ] [ ] where it leaves said Scovill's [ ]March 25th 1825. Recorded 28th March 1825

136. This may certify that we were called on to examine the Road lately altered beginning at **Joshua Smiths** and running North westerly through **Timothy Scovels** where it intersects the old road on the oath of twelve freeholders that said alteration is useless and unnecessary and we therefore hereby certify that we consider the record of the above altration as null and void and of no effect. April 25th 1825. Recorded June 30th 1825

At a meeting of the commissioners of highways of the town of Hector in the county of Tompkins, At the house of **Merenus Stephens** in said town on the 3rd day of Octr. 1829--All the said commissioners having met and deliberated on the subject embraced in this order, It was ordered and determined by the said commissioners that a highway be laid out in the said town upon the application of **Jasper Smith 2d** commencing at the North East corner of lot No. 45 in said town and running thence Westerly to intersect a public highway leading from the lake road on the North bank of the bulls horn run to Reynolds Ville, near the dwelling house of **Wm. Goold,** and passing through the improved land of **Merenus Stephens, William Goold** and **Jasper Smith 2d** each of whome consent thereto. The courses and distances whereof according to a survey thereof are as follows, beginning at the North East corner of lot No. 45 Hector running West on the North line of said Lot, 25 chains to an iron wood sapling, thence [north and west], thence [south and west], thence N. 54ø W. 3 chains 66 links to the North bounds of said lot no. 45, thence W. on the north line of said lot, 27 chains, thence N. 70ø W. 4 chains, thence S. 75ø W. 5 chains 33 links, thence N. 80ø W. 2 chains, thence N. 54ø W. 2 chains, thence N. 53ø W. 1 chain 50 links, thence N. 52ø W. 2 chains 13 links to **Wm. Goolds** East line, thence S. 25ø W. 4 chains 19 links to the South line of said **Goolds** land, thence W. 6 chains 19 links to the intersection with the above mentioned highway. And it was further ordered that the line above discribed be the center of the said highway, and that the said highway be of the width of three rods.
In witness whereof the said commissioners have hereunto subscribed
their names-- Dated the 3d day of Oct'r. 1829
Recorded Nov. 25th signed James Darling

[The above seems to document the old Chicken Coop Hill Road, where is used to come out to join the present day Picnic Area Road, crossing Potomac Road. Looking at the old maps there is a definite large curve in the road close to the intersection with Potomac Road. William Gould's land, according to the deeds was located on South East corner of Lot 34. Tompkins County Deeds, Liber 1, page 188.]

The descriptions tell you what families lived in the area, including Hodges, Goulds, Smiths, Scovilles, Hotchkiss, Reynolds, Himrods, Coddingtons, and Stephens. I became interested in using these records when I was trying to find out where the Joshua Smith family lived. I searched the deeds extensively, even plotting out his neighbors' land records using the original census records. I finally did find a deed for him buried in complicated settlement involving the Lawrence Family. He was my great great grandfather's brother. He settled on Lot 45, not far from his brother Jasper Smith who is buried in the Reynoldsville Cemetery. Joshua Smith had a son named Jasper as well who is mentioned in my last transcription as Jasper 2d, his father having already died. The majority of the Joshua Smith family moved to Tioga County, Pennsylvania as did some of the Reynolds family. His brother, the elder Jasper Smith who lived on Lot 38, on Sirrine Road, remained in Hector. Some of his descendants live in Hector yet.

The photograph at the left was taken approximately 1913 in Reynoldsville, School District No 11. It was provided by Lynn Taber, his mother is the teacher in the photo.

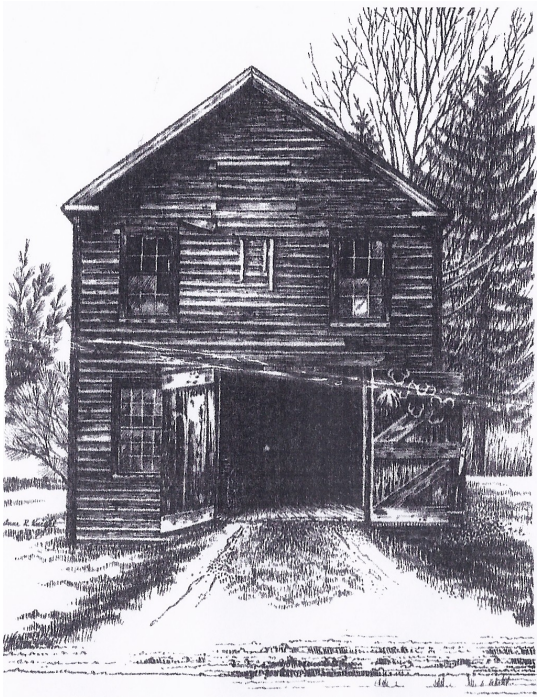
Rynoldsville School District 11, about 1913
Rear or standing row, l to r. Frances Soule, Ethyl Evans, Loucile Willis, Clarence Wrightman Chester Houseworth, John Covert & Arthur Auble.
Seated row, ltor. Ilah Evans, Harold Dean, Millard Kelley, Ralph Wilson, Morris Willis & Ralph Dean. Front, lying on ground,..... Eldred Covert, & Paul Dean. (the source of all these picts and identification!

Center, teaher Lena-Bell CONGER
MARRIED Taber that year.

Mystery photo's

Do you know what and where this building once stood?

Last Edition's Mystery Photo:



Last Month's Mystery Picture Identification

Wagon Shop at Perry City, Routes 227 and 228, east of Reynoldsville, New York, researched and drawn by Anne Knight, Townsendville, New York.

It was 1833. Arriving from Massachusetts that year were Joseph and Elizabeth Tripp and their 12-year old son, Humphrey. Soon afterward they built this wagon shop, where by 1850 Humphrey was doing a brisk business as a wheelwright. The reaper had been invented in 1830, and farm equipment of all kinds was being built.

Perry City had received its post office charter July 31, 1815, and was a fast-growing "society of friends". Because of the social needs of its citizens, the second floor of the shop, now called "the Tripp wagon shop" became a hall for suppers, meetings and fraternal organizations. It had a convenient side entrance, an inside stairway, a cloak room and a platform at one end of the long room for plays and programs.

Later the hall became the fur-trading and binder twine sales room of its owner, Seneca Shaw. Later still, a son-in-law and daughter who lived next door used the wagon shop for a garage and storage until it was taken down in 1984 to make way for highway improvements. From its history, the Tripp wagon shop, believed to be the last of its kind in the state, has given us a better understanding of rural American enterprise.

From information supplied by Mr. and Mrs. Harold Shriner, last owners of the Tripp wagon shop.

William Sutton : His life, His work, His legacy
by Patt Dietlin

William Sutton: His Life, His Work, His Legacy.

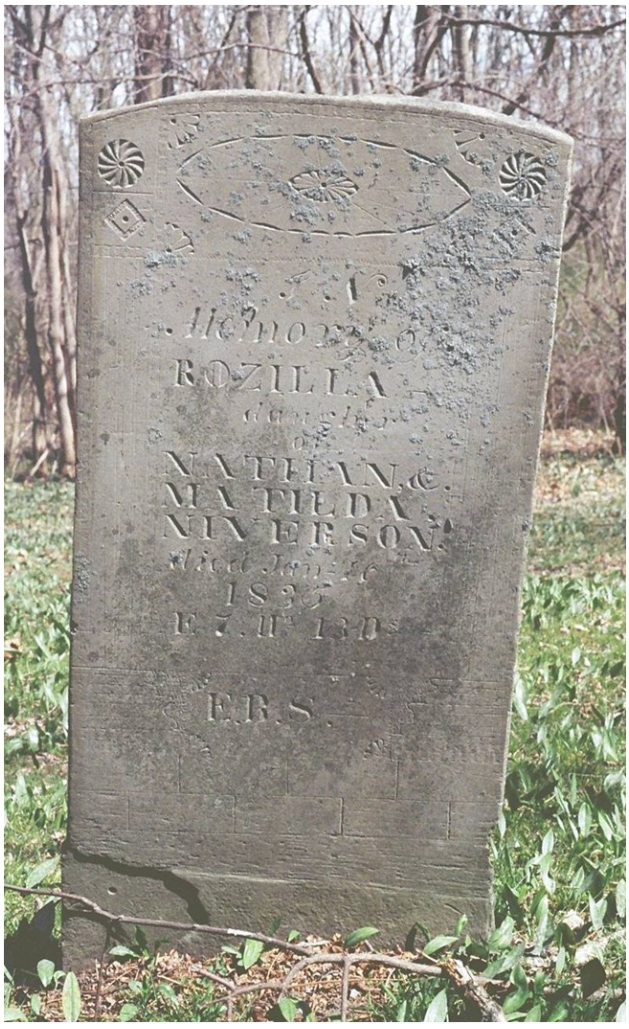
The following will be part of the Special Event Presentation on April 25, 2015 at the Reynoldsville Community Center, see flyer on page 3.

The Presentation:

It started out as a term paper on iconography for an Art History class at SUNY Cortland back in the 1970's. It turned into a decades long, on again off again, cold case research project that has connected me to sources in California, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania…..and possibly Ontario. I have learned about the work of William Sutton and his sons – a piece of New York History that speaks to us across two hundred years of time and place. It's been a journey of discovery, of piecing together the lifetime of a man who left little behind but the work of his hands.

The speaker:

Patt Dietlin. I currently live on Cape Cod, where I work as a counselor and a science teacher for upper elementary/middle school students. I lived in Freeville, New York (late 60's, early 70's) ; was a student at SUNY Cortland and worked part time as a lab preparator for freshman biology students in the Neurobiology lab at Cornell. While the William Sutton project may appear to be a finished work, there are still many tidbits of information I would like to chase after. Also, my interest in a contemporary of his – Elijah Boutwell Smith – has been seriously perked….I could very easily see myself, camera and notebook in hand, poking about in the old cemeteries between the Lakes….



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Trustee meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the third Wednesday of each month at the Backbone Ridge History Research Center at the intersection of Route 96A and SR 414 in the Village of Lodi.

WWW.BACKBONERIDGEHISTORYGROUP.COM

For new and renewal memberships, please send $10 to Membership Chair, Rose Smith, at PO Box 64, Trumansburg, NY 14886.

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