

The Backbone

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

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



SUMMER "VACATION" 1921 SUBMITTED BY MARSHA SMITH

My grandfather, Herman Smith, was a wonderful diarist. We have many of his diaries spanning a number of years. In later years, the diary became a sort of "family diary." I noticed that the handwriting changed on some entries and that it clearly was being written by one of the children. I asked my father, Alfred Smith, about it and he confirmed that his dad let anyone who wanted keep the diary. As a result, we end up with a look at life through several sets of eyes and it gives us a whole new perspective on life. It is fun to see what the kids think. In 1921, my uncle Frank Smith kept the diary for several days. At the time, he would have been 12 years of age-- old enough to help. Frank Smith spent the majority of his life on the farm on Kelley's Corners. He lived there until the late 1980's when he had a house fire. At that time he sold the house and lot and moved to Interlaken. He passed away in February of 1996, the last elder in our family. Here is what he was up to in July of 1921:

Monday, July 4th
Hot. We went to the celebration at Lodi. Took our dinner. We had fireworks at night.

Tuesday, July 5th
Hot. Papa harrowed. Uncle John called.

Wednesday, July 6th
Hot. I helped Uncle John in haying. I raked about 4 acres of hay in forenoon. We drew 3 loads in the barn.

Thursday, July 7th
Hot. Helped Uncle John in haying. We drew in 5 loads. I drove on horse fork. Papa drilled buckwheat.

Friday, July 8th
Hot in forenoon. Had a thunderstorm at night. Papa cut rye.

Saturday, July 9th
Cooler after the rain but warm in the afternoon. We all went to town in evening.

Sunday, July 10th
Hot. We went around the square in car. Stopped to Stricklands to hear their gramophone. We came home in the rain. Harry Strickland called. Papa and Mama went over to see buckwheat in morning.
(Continued on page 3)

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PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Greetings everyone. Once again I want to thank Kari Milliman Gauntt for her talents and time in assembling all of the pieces of the newsletter into a very attractive package.

The Backbone Ridge History Group had a very busy and rewarding spring beginning with a semi-annual visit by Dave Lacy from the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont. Dave's cheerfulness and knowledge about restoring the stones in old abandoned cemeteries makes it a pleasurable experience honoring the folks buried there long ago. This spring we completed the Clawson Family Cemetery, returned to the Jones Cemetery in Lodi, and cleared and secured the stones in the Bond Family Cemetery in the Cronk Pasture. As in the past, new volunteers came to help- from Horseheads, Elmira, Waterloo and the South Seneca School. Thank you to Dave Beckhorn for coordinating this activity with the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forest.

Dr. LouAnn Wurst returned from Western Michigan University for the twelfth season with a cadre of grad students. They excavated additional sites, researched at the Schuyler County Clerk's Office, hosted Heather Mott's South Seneca High School "Founding Fathers" class for a day and presented their current findings and interpretations using the latest interactive technology at an evening program at the Hector Presbyterian Church. We were honored to have Forest Supervisor Colleen Pelles Madrid and Donna Grosz, Public Services Staff Officer in the audience.

One of the artifacts located is our mystery photo for this issue. The Searsburg Grange Hall was the group's campsite and headquarters. We are exploring the possibility of some classroom activities there next spring so participants learn that there is more to archaeology than digging. I spent a few hours on hands and knees, too, a rewarding, painstaking process for YOUNGER people.

Not to be forgotten is last fall's fabulous program on the history of Mecklenburg organized by Karen Allen. There was standing room only at the Mecklenburg Firehouse until that ran out and some people had to be turned away. The program will be repeated this coming fall.

Other activities-

Oral history interviews are continuing, most recently with Dick Hunt on Stilwell Road and Charlotte Bond on Mathews Road. A recording of Dave Wickham's presentation at the Women's Wednesday Afternoon Club has been transcribed and is being edited.

Photos of the Backbone Ridge farmsteads and surrounding communities are being gathered for mounting on large display boards for use in programs and exhibits at the Forest Headquarters building and the local fairs. This project is funded by a grant from the Finger Lakes National Forest and is being coordinated by Doris Pike.

Historical information is being gathered to support an application to the William G. Pomeroy Foundation for a Historic Roadside Marker at a site on or near the Backbone Ridge. Sandra Bradford, Hector Town Historian is spearheading this project.

(continued on page 3)

SUMMER "VACATION" 1921

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Monday, July 11th

Cool. Gladys and Willie Strickland called in morning. Mama is washing. Fred Austin.
[note: Uncle Frank later married Gladys Strickland]

Tuesday, July 12th

Helped Uncle John in haying in afternoon. Drewed in 3 loads. Papa plowed. Fred Austin and John Dean called. Charlie Farr helped Uncle John.

Wednesday, July 13th

Fred Austin, John Dean called. Papa harrowed on hill field. We have 32 acres of buckwheat up. We went to Ovid in evening to the Chautauqua.

Thursday, July 14th

Hot. Fred Austin, John Dean called. Papa finished drilling buckwheat (39 acres). Had a thunder storm at night. Stricklands called in afternoon. (My grandfather Herman wrote the following in the margin: 215# of buckwheat of Geo. Townsend --\$6.45)

Friday, July 15th

Cool. Fred Austin, George Beach, and Floyd Raymond called. Creeks are very high. Floyd went in a swimming. Papa called to Uncle John's and stayed to dinner. Mr. Strickland called. Uncle John and Aunt Demma called. Papa and Mama went down to see the buckwheat. It is knee high. [Herman wrote in the margin: Williamsons borrowed 83# of oats.]

Saturday, July 16th

Hot. Helped Uncle John in haying. Drewed in 3 loads. We went to town in Eve.

(continued on Page 4)



PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

Museumwise, a regional support group for local historical organizations, provided funding for a consultant to spend a half day in May with us laying the groundwork for a strategic plan for the next five years. Since then committees have been meeting to shape the specifics under four broad categories: operations; archives; educational programming; and partnerships and financial support.

And last but not least, I want to thank Marci Van Der Heide for the sharp looking and informative posters that you see around town and in newsletters advertising our programs.

Until next time, please keep us in mind when some historic document or artifact relating to the Backbone Ridge or surrounding communities appears.

Submitted by Allan Buddle, President

SUMMER "VACATION" 1921

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Sunday, July 17th

Stricklands called in morning. Papa went on a ride with Mr. Strickland and Harry. Uncle John and Aunt D (Diademina) called in afternoon.

Monday, July 18th

Cloudy. Papa cut hay in front of Fred Mason's. Fred Austin and John Dean called. We went to Uncle John's to get some lettuce. Alfred called to Fred Austins. [Note: Alfred is my father-- he would have been about 8 years old at the time.]

Tuesday, July 19th

Rainy in afternoon. Papa and Mr. Strickland drew rye in forenoon. Edna made fudge. I popped corn. Put up the tent. [Herman wrote in the margin: Strickland ½ day] [Note: Edna is Frank's older sister.]

Wednesday, July 20th

Cloudy. Fred Austin, John Dean, Alvin Doolittle called. Papa raked hay with side rake. Had a shower at night. Alice Mason and Aunt Demma called.

Thursday, July 21st

Hot. Papa and Mr. Strickland went after black berrys [sic]. Papa got about 6 quarts. Papa took Edna and Mama up to Youngses [sic] to the Ladies Aid at noon. In afternoon we drew 4 loads of hay in barn. Mr. Strickland helped. [Herman wrote in margin: Strickland ½ day]

Friday, July 22nd

Papa cut hay in forenoon. Pauline Taylor called. Drewed in 4 loads in afternoon. [Herman wrote in margin: Strickland ½ day]

Saturday, July 23rd

Hot. Drew 4 loads of hay in barn. Mrs. Strickland called. We all went to town in eve. Changed horse fork to the shed. Willie helped me drive on horse fork. [Herman noted in margin; S[trickland] 8 hours]

Sunday, July 24th

Hot. Stricklands called and took dinner with us. Uncle John, Fred Mason called. Gladys, Willie and us kids took a ride in the buggy up to Youngses.

Monday, July 25th

Rain. Papa cut hay in morning. We drewed in 1 load in afternoon. Had a shower at night. [Herman noted in margin; S[trickland] 1 hour]

(Continued on page 7)

FOUNDING FATHERS REFLECTION

BY SARAH BREWER

The following article was written by Sarah Brewer, a student in Mrs. Heather Mott's South Seneca class:

Today my Founding Father's class were archaeologists. We were invited to help excavate sites that students from Michigan have been working on. It was no doubt, one of the best field trips I have been on. The part I liked the most of the day was the hands on aspect of it. My group and I were digging in what was most likely a root cellar. We found a horseshoe, porcelain bowl, a key and many rocks! The moment when we found something amongst the rocks and dirt was so incredibly rewarding. In addition, the idea that such artifacts illustrate a picture as to what life may have been like in an era is astonishing. In our society now, everything is documented, accounted for, and recorded. So future generations will most likely know what a common object today is. However, in the past such drastic measures were rarely taken. Cameras were either nonexistent, coming into production, or too extravagant for common folk to have.

Likewise, the same holds true for written records. Both of these methods are standard in our lives today. Thus, the artifacts that archaeologists uncover while digging, allows for a glance into the past. It is by means of the artifacts that we are able to piece together what life may have been like, which is an important thing to note when learning and looking back into history. This is where my field trip ties back to my Founding Father's class. In my class, we are studying early America, from the government, the colonies, and all the obstacles the Founding Fathers faced. The information which we are studying did not simply appear one day in a text book, no, rather it was the work of preservation of artifacts that lead to our knowledge of the past. By preservation of handing down family heirlooms or the work of archaeologists that uncovered and accounted objects, either way helped to record the past. Through such finds, historians are then able to piece together what they know and the found object and construct a consensus as to what life was like in colonial America. Therefore allowing all of us to see into the past and to have a greater appreciation for what archaeologists do.



From left to right,
 Kyle Lesage, Erica D'Alia, Mark Hoock, Dr. LouAnn Wurst. Standing in front—Heather Mott

CLAWSON CEMETERY

WRITTEN BY JULIE AND TED CLAWSON



The burial grounds on the homestead of Garret Clawson, who settled in Hector from Virginia, circa 1800, on land purchased from John Livingston, state surveyor for the town, was recently refurbished under the auspices of the Backbone Ridge History Group Cemetery Committee.

Garret Clawson is buried there along with his first and second wives, a son, a daughter-in-law, two grandchildren, an unrelated neighbor, and probable others.

CLAWSON FAMILY CEMETERY

Seneca Road
Town of Hector, Schuyler County
New York
Recorded May 12, 2012



SENECA ROAD

In Memory of Margaret Silvernale Who died July 10, 1825 Æ 81 years	In Memory of Margaret Wife of Garret Clawson Who Died Dec. 26 1824 in the 52 years of Life	[Blank Stone]	In Memory of Elizabeth ² Wife of Garret Clawson Who died Jan. 21 1832. Æ 53 years	In memory of Garret Clawson who died June 9, 1841 Æ 74 ys. 5 mo. 21
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← N

Memory of Eleanor daughter of Peter & Eleanor Clawson died March 6, 1839 Æ 4 yrs 1 m 27 ds	Henry V. Son of Garret & Lydia Clawson died Aug. 6, 1831 Aged 1 year 11 Mo & 25 Da.	Eleanor Wife of Peter Clawson, died Apr. 2, 1842 aged 51 years 3 months and 15 days	Garret B. Clawson Died June 7 1838 Æ 44 Ys. 5 Mo. & 2 Ds.
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To Cats Elbow →

SUMMER "VACATION" 1921 (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

Tuesday, July 26th

Hot. Papa cut hay in forenoon. I made a popgun. Fred Austin called. We drew in 4 loads in afternoon.

[Herman noted in margin; Strickland ½ day]

Wednesday, July 27th

Hot. White Face had kittens. Drew in 3 loads of hay. Changed fork into big barn. Fred Austin called. Papa cut oats. [Herman noted in margin; Strickland ½ day]

Thursday, July 28th

Rained in forenoon. In afternoon Papa and I set up oats. We have about 24 acres of hay in barn. Fred Austin called. Edna and Stricklands went black berrying.

Friday, July 29th

Uncle John and us took tents and camped on Valois Point. Uncle John took small tent and we took big tent. Us kids went bare footed in lake. Not feeling good.

Saturday, July 30th

Papa and I went up to Valois after eats. Uncle John got a boat and we went fishing. Fish took the hook. Heard Katie Dids at night.

Sunday, July 31st

Uncle John went in and took a swim. We packed up and went home.

Uncle Frank's July was filled with many chores. He seemed to take some pleasure in the family's accomplishments. At the same token, they find time for fun-- the Festival on July 4th, fireworks, berrying, buggy rides, camping out on Valois Point and fishing. There were several things going on at the same time-- haying, sowing buckwheat, and harvesting oats and rye.

Forty years later, my brothers and I would have similar summers in Hector on our family farm. My brothers would help my great Uncle Dan Germain, my father, and Charlie and Clarence Huston with the hay. They would earn enough money for spending at the Hector Carnival. We also passed our time playing in the creek on our property, eating green apples, cherries, and berries as they came into season. When it rained, we sat on the front porch with a glass of iced tea and watched it rain, passing the time with quiet conversation.

Life was good as a child growing up on a family farm, although we often did not realize it at the time....



HAYMAKERS SWITCHEL

In haying season, farmers used to take their "nooning" with them including a jug of Switchel to wash the meal down. Although Switchel was usually straight, the farmers have been known to spike it with hard cider or even brandy which "down easters" used to say "got the hay in the barn in half the time."

Walter Hollien Presents:

A MILL HISTORY

**A look back into the importance
Of water powered mills in American history, the inven-
tions that revolutionized milling, and the local mill
industry.**

**Saturday, July 21, 2012, 7:00 p.m.
At Damiani Wine Cellars
4704 State Route 414, Hector, New York**

**Presentation by Walter Hollien, R.A.
Followed by refreshments and a tour of the adjacent
Millstone Research Center**



**This program is Free and
Open to the Public**

**Sponsored by:
The Backbone Ridge
History Group**

**For more
information, contact
Allan Buddle
607-532-4213**

LAST EDITION'S MYSTERY PHOTO

In the Spring Edition 2012, we asked if any of you knew where this photo was taken. We didn't hear from anyone this time! This photo is Early Downtown Mecklenburg, year unknown.



INNOCENTVILLE AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Never heard of it! You must be newcomer. It is a rickety shell of a building, not long for this world, and it is all that's left of Innocentville. Innocentville is what some called it. There were others who referred to it as Ragged Run. Nobody ever gave it an official name. It started in Tompkins County but was given, with the rest of Hector Township, to Schuyler County in 1854.

Within 65 years, only remnants of the building were left. Today it is a ghost town. The earliest route to the ghost town for Tompkins County is from Trumansburg to Searsburg and westward towards Seneca Lake for a ways. At the fourth intersecting crossroad past Searsburg, the south turn bares toward Logan. A dirt road to the north is marked "Bishop's Corners". It takes a left turn here onto Bishop's Corners Road, to find where Innocentville once existed.

The first few hundred yards, going north are increasingly becoming reclaimed by nature, now that man has forsaken this marginal farming land. Brush lots, new evergreen plantations and weeds fill the lots on either side of a small creek, dry much of the year. Sharp eyes will soon note; on the east side of the road, signs of former occupancy, lilac bushes rose and lilies now grown wild. Remnants of cellars and foundations of houses and barns are screened from view by hay and other native flowers. Visible only if a hiker stumbles through the thickets, surrounding them are some stones lined wells.

Peopling these houses, before all died or gave up the simple by demanding life of the family farm, were residents named; George and Benjamin Clawson, Alanson Wilson, John Williams, Smith, Hawes, Herman ____, and Alwood at different times.

At almost the north end, just before reaching the next east-west road, the Town Line Road, which divided Schuyler and Seneca County, there once stood a Wesleyan Church. In 1958, an elderly man named E.G. (continued on page 10)

INNOCENTVILLE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

Porter wrote that his father, David and Elmer Clawson and other members of the church, cut much of The logs that were sawed into lumber to erect that church.” The church was dedicated and Father (Porter) preached there for four years. Then moved to Pennsylvania for four years. Laura White preached there for awhile and there were others. Later, there were not enough people to keep the church going. The building was torn down.” The David Porter family moved to the area in 1881 when E.G. Porter was six years old. Descendants live within a mile of thee place today.

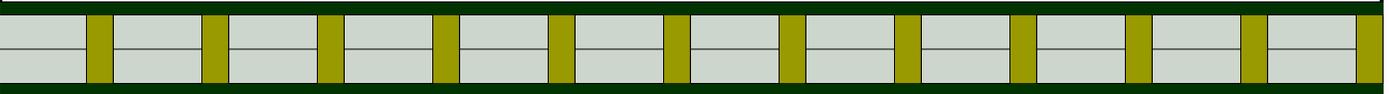
To the north of the church site, which is on the east side of the road, is another creek, also mostly dry run. Both of Innocentville’s streams empty into Breakneck Creek, which reached Seneca Lake below Valois, through a high walled ravine.

The church was dismantled about 1920 and a house built of hits materials by a man, George Jennings. The empty structure of the broken windows and open doorways still stands on Townline Road, below Cat’s Elbow, west of Innocentville (1970).

Cat’s Elbow is a fractured bend of the road which leads into Seneca County for a few rods and then curves back into Schuyler and all but doubles back on itself for a ways before stretching to Route 414. It might have been a straight road except of Breakneck Creek. The early road followed the path of least resistance through the gully and has never been changed. Going east on Town Line Road, during the days of Innocentville’s lifetime, there were two blacksmith shops and several farm homes before on reaching the school house on the south or Schuyler side of the road at the approach to the intersection.

Near the school, three basket factories once operated. The baskets, for packaging for market, the plums and grapes grown in the area, were made of basswood and tacked by hand. Than handy and therefore heaps supply of bassword was about worked out and splints were being imported when a large basket factory was opened across Seneca Lake in Penn Yan. Innocentville’s industry ended.

Alanson Wilson, who lived in the farm east north house on Bishop Corners Road, when the Porters moved there, there was still farming at the same site in 1893. His post office was Lodi Centre a vicinity long ago closed. Benjamin Clawson was according to that year’s County Directory still his neighbor. (continued on page 12)



SUMMER MYSTERY PHOTO



Dr. Wurst and her crew uncovered four of these vessels in an abandonment dump (circa 1940) at the Estelle Kimble farm. The vessels are made out of porcelain, measure 5 3/4" in diameter, and stand 11 1/4" high. One of them has an impressed "S" on the vase. The interior surface is pitted, and has a thick worn ridge two inches from the rim.

Can anyone identify these?

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Please notice the label on the mailer page of your newsletter if you have become a member.

A **red rectangle** will indicate that your dues for 2012 are overdue.

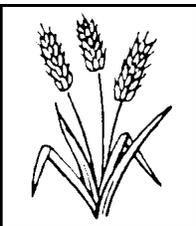
If there is a red **P**, that will indicate that your dues are paid for 2012.

If you have renewed, thank you!

Your dues go toward supporting production and mailing of the newsletter and for program support.

If you have not become a member, we hope you will support us in learning about and sharing more of the history of the Backbone Ridge and the surrounding communities. Thank You!

Rose Smith, Membership Chairman



Backbone Ridge History Group
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Newsletter Designer/Editor

- Kari Milliman Gauntt

INNOCENTVILLE
 (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

The name of Innocentville was a whimsy which took root but never the accepted name of the settlement. For lack of any other, it is now designed by that fanciful title, suitable enough for a quiet, and now lost village.

From the files of Edith Brown, provided by Julie Clawson, Lodi Town Historian.

Check your mailing label below, to see if you have a red rectangle (need to pay 2012 dues) or red "P" (2012 dues paid). We don't want you to miss the next issue of The Backbone!

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