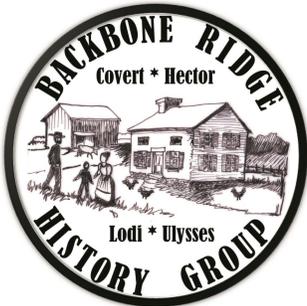


# The Backbone

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

BECAUSE HISTORY MATTERS



## BUSY DAYS, PROGRESS AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT AT THE REYNOLDSVILLE CEMETERY

BY ALLAN BUDDLE



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The Reynoldsville Cemetery has been in disarray for decades with little maintenance. Early last fall, as a result of discussion at a Hector Town Board meeting, the Backbone Ridge History Group decided to dedicate some time and energy to begin a cleanup and restoration project there. Having observed the size and condition of the Reynoldsville Cemetery, it was and still is understood that far more than a couple of weekends will be needed.

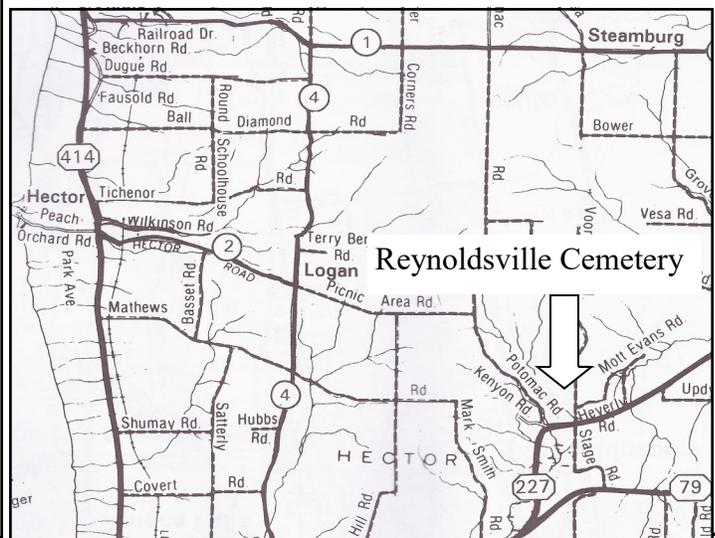
Under the leadership of Cemetery Chairman Dave Beckhorn, we were able to bring together a “small army” (Dave’s words), a listing of burials to be updated, hand and power tools, and lots of enthusiasm. The Hector Town Highway Depart-

ment assisted by clearing a path to the cemetery, providing crushed stone to be used for bedding the headstones that were flat on the ground, chipping the piles of brush and limbs cleared from the cemetery and providing a place for volunteers to park. Hot dogs and rolls were sent up from the church bazaar. As the letter from Sharon and Mark Ricci below indicates, several headstones were discovered that were not on the list of burials. Doris

Pike updated the burial list with new information and some corrections. The updated list will be made available.

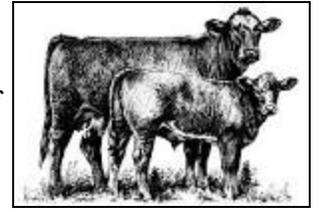
Robert Simpson, representing the Watkins Glen Chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, placed American Flags on the many headstones of those (continued on page 3)

(continued on page 3)



## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE BY ALLAN BUDDLE

Here comes Christmas again! While preparing articles for this newsletter, I read again the article describing the path from Reynoldsville to Peach Orchard and realized that was exactly 200 years ago or 200 Christmases ago. Christmas has changed a lot as you can see from Marsha Smith's article from the early diaries of her family. If you have some special Christmas stories that you think others would enjoy reading please pass them along.



Armed with electronic equipment and specialized database software, some of which has been provided by a grant from the Nelson B. Delavan Foundation, the Archives Committee is moving ahead with a plan for indexing the many and varied documents that been collected by committee members. We will not only find out what each committee member has in their closet, but we will be able to share an index of these documents with anyone wishing to use the documents for research.

Speaking of research, Backbone Ridge History Group Trustee David Smith will soon provide genealogical services for families having some connection to the Hector Backbone and surrounding communities. We hope to add a family history feature to the *Backbone* in future issues.

For several months the Trustees have been brainstorming ideas for future program presentations. Some of the suggestions: poultry on the Hector Backbone, specific family histories, country doctors, fruit growing and marketing on the Hector Backbone, CCC and WPA Days and crockery manufacturing. If anyone has suggestions of topics or would like to make a presentation, please let us know.

We continue to be in touch with David Holly, the Great, Great Grandson of E. B. Smith who carved so many stones found in the cemeteries around the area. Once again we found at least one in the Reynoldsville Cemetery this fall while working there. David has family buried in a small plot near Matthews Road and we hope to obtain permission at some point to work on that cemetery.

In closing I would like to thank everyone for your dedication to our group and to the history of the Hector Backbone. If you know of someone else who may be interested we have provided an insert in this newsletter that can be used for a gift membership. On behalf of all the Trustees, have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



**BUSY DAYS, PROGRESS AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT AT THE  
REYNOLDSVILLE CEMETERY  
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)**

who served during the Civil War.

Sue Magnosi and Gloria Kellogg have been the unofficial caretakers of the Reynoldsville Cemetery for years. They expressed gratitude for all the volunteer work and were impressed with the amount of progress that was made. It is their wish to someday create an appropriate sign to add dignity to the cemetery.

One of the most interesting outcomes of the weekend was a request from a neighbor to come and get a headstone that was part of her sidewalk and return it to the cemetery. Those with knowledge of the history of Reynoldsville believe the headstone belongs to the family that donated the land for the cemetery in the early 1800's. (continued on page 9)



Gloria Kellogg, Sue Magnosi, and David Beckhorn

**CHRISTMAS ON THE BACKBONE  
BY MARSHA SMITH**

It seemed fitting that an article describing the old Christmas traditions practiced by the people who lived on or in the vicinity of the Back Bone Ridge be included in the December issue. I examined diary entries from Gilbert C. Smith's 1857 diary, his youngest brother, my grandfather, Herman's diaries which span several years until the 1930's, and my great Aunt Diadem's diaries. I actually have several other diaries but like many people, the diarist would be faithful in making entries at the beginning of the year and would peter out by the time Christmas rolled around. At first, I was disappointed at what I read. Many of the entries were written by adults and seemed somewhat boring. I even joked with my friends here and said I was writing the most boring article I have ever written and the subject matter was, Christmas!!!! Then I began to think about the way we have all been conditioned to think about Christmas. Christmas was much simpler 100 years ago. In our ancestors' day, there were no TV's blasting us with colorful ads, designed to have us buy STUFF. They may have seen an ad or two in the local paper, but I assume they were pretty low key. I have looked at old store ledgers from the Finger Lakes-- as early as the 1830's-- and the purchases, which may have been extravagant for the times, usually consisted of food items for the feast and special treats to eat. The majority of the customers were farmers who grew most of their own food, took their wheat to a local mill to make flour, and most of the gifts given were, likewise, homemade. The celebration was often a community event, held at the local church or even the school. The dinner was an intimate family event and the simple gifts, given with love, were cherished by the children with the same excitement and same wonder we witness today with our little ones. (continued on page 6)

## M Y S T E R Y   P H O T O



Thank you to Nancy and Norman Dean of Jacksonville for sharing a circa 1900 photo of their family home, owned at the time by their grandparents William G. and Mary E. (Proper) Dean who were married about 1890. The home was located south of the intersection of Bower Road and Vesa Road about a mile. Going south from that intersection there was a fork in the road. The left fork has a curve in it which may be where the house was located. Sitting in the back seat on a Sunday drive in the 1950's, Nancy remembers the house still standing which would indicate that it was probably on private property at that time, since the government would have destroyed all of the buildings on government land by that time.

William and Mary Dean had three children, Anna,

Earl and Sefronia.

Anna married Christopher Dean, a different Dean family. They had two children, Robert and Elsie.

Earl Dean married Ruth Elliot. They had two children, Norman and Nancy, neither who married.

Sefronia died while a student at Cornell in 1920.

John Dean, son of Nancy and Norman's patriot ancestor, settled in the Town of Hector. He is buried in the Jones Cemetery.

See Page 11 for this month's Mystery Photo.

## T H E   B L O C K   S C H O O L   H O U S E B Y   A L L A N   B U D D L E

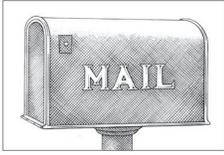
### Confirmation of Block School House location

An article in the Fall 2013 issue of the *Backbone* describing the path from Reynoldsville to Peach Orchard in 1813, included a reference to the Block School House with a general description of its location.

*A building on the farm now occupied by George Howell, on Lot No. 32 was occupied by transient families. North of this a dense wilderness extended for two miles, to the block school house. A man by the name of Bumpas had made a clearing at this point.*

In reviewing oral history interviews, we discovered a comment by John Hart that identifies the Block School House at the intersection of Logan Road and Dugue Road in the Town of Hector. The school is District No. 19. John attended there until age 9 in 1930 when he moved with his family to Munson Road.

(continued on page 7)



**MAIL CALL  
COMMENTS AND LETTERS AND  
PICTURES FROM OUR READERS**

Editor's Note: "Mail Call" will become a new regular article in all future issues. Let us hear from you! We welcome letters and pictures from our readers. Please include name, address, and phone number with your submission. You can email us at [orchardland@zoom-dsl.com](mailto:orchardland@zoom-dsl.com) or write us at Backbone Ridge History Group, PO Box 64, Trumansburg, NY 14886. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity.

Letter from Roy Ike

9-20-13

*Allan*

*In your last Backbone Ridge newsletter you mentioned that the Six Nations fought with the King.*

*My 4<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, was a war chief of the Oneida nation. At the battle of West Canada Creek, he shot the most notorious Tory raider in the King's Army. The Oneida's led the Patriots in that battle (400 patriots against 600 King's soldiers).*

*The Oneida Nation fought for many years with George Washington's troops.*

*I thought you might like to know this so that history could be written a little better.*

*Thank you very much.*

*Roy Ike*

*P.S. My great grandfather, also a member of the Oneida Nation, fought in the Civil War with the N. Y. Regulars.*

Editor's Note- We are grateful to Roy for clarifying an oversimplification in the article- *A Brief History of the Newtown Road Area (author unknown)*, in the Fall 2013 Edition of the *Backbone*.

**C H R I S T M A S   O N   T H E   B A C K B O N E**  
**B Y   M A R S H A   S M I T H**  
**( C O N T I N U E D   F R O M   P A G E   3 )**

**1857: Diary of Gilbert C. Smith**

Gilbert C. Smith was the oldest surviving son of John T. and Emeline Cole Smith. He is a David Cole and Rachel Townsend descendant. In 1857, he was going to school in Trumansburg and living with Cole relatives there. His father, John T. Smith, was living in the Butcher Hill area at the time. Gilbert elected to spend the holiday in Trumansburg with his Cole relatives.

**December 25<sup>th</sup>**

Christmas. No school. Was thinking some of going over home to Lodi today-- but did not go-- went on horseback to Uncle Eds.

**1884: Diary of Herman T. Smith**

Herman T. Smith, my grandfather, was living on Hall's Corner's road, between Tunison Road and Townline Road. In 1884, he traveled to Washington DC with his cousin, Herman C. Smith. Herman C. Smith was the son of Obadiah and Ann Culver Smith. He lived on the homestead farm in the Town of Covert, just outside Trumansburg on what is now called Congress Extension. My grandfather traveled to Washington, DC to meet with his brothers to negotiate the settlement of their father's estate. John T. Smith died when Herman was still an infant and the estate, including the farm on which Herman lived, was not settled until Herman came of age in 1885. Herman is visiting his older sister, Athena Tufts and his older brother, Francis A. Smith. Senator Cole is Athena and Francis' uncle. He spent this Christmas with family, but not in the Town of Covert.

**Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

A fine day. Herm and myself called at Athena's and came around by Lincoln Park. Saw his statue, Emancipation. Senator Cole took dinner with Frank. Looks cloudy and is getting colder, has the appearance of snow.

**1886: Diary of Herman T. Smith**

Herman Smith is at home in the Town of Covert this year. He and his older sister, Diadem (Dema) spent part of their holiday with a cousin in Trumansburg, attending a function at the Baptist Church. They came back to Hall's Corners on Christmas morning to spend, I assume, the day with their mother and brother, John W. Smith.

**Friday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**

Pleasant. Dema and myself went down to a snow house entertainment at the Baptist Church at Trumansburg. Staid over night at George Mason's. I received a diary and a necktie.

**Saturday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

Colder. We came home this morning.

**1899: Diary of Diadem Smith**

Aunt Diadem, my great aunt, never married. She lived with her bachelor brother, John W. Smith. I am not certain where they were living at the time, probably on Hall's Corners Road. I do know that later, they lived on West Avenue, on the edge of Interlaken. The garage on the property was built from lumber from the old house on Hall's Corners Road. I have NO idea where my grandfather and grandmother were living at the

(continued on page 8)

**T H E   B L O C K   S C H O O L   H O U S E**  
**BY ALLAN BUDDLE**  
**( C O N T I N U E D   F R O M   P A G E   4 )**

near Interlaken. There is a home in what appears to have been the school house. The school and a cemetery are both shown at that location on the 1874 Atlas. John remembers that cemetery and is quite concerned that there is no evidence of that cemetery today. If anyone has any information about the Block School House or the missing cemetery, we would be very pleased to have that information so it can be shared with John.

AN: When you went to Munson Road, were you again in a one room schoolhouse? *JH: Yes.*

AN: And was it different in any way from the one that was up by Dugue Road? *JH: Yes. It had a modern indoor bathrooms, or toilets.* AN: That is a significant change. *JH: Chemical toilets. It was heated with coal and wood, of course. We had about the same number of kids.* AN: That was 10-12? *JH: Yes. And there again I lived about ½ mile from the school. But I still walked home for lunch because we had an hour so I could make it home, have a quick lunch and back to school.* AN: And how many years now were you at the school on Munson Road? *JH: I was there through sixth grade. When I went to seventh grade it was at the new school in Interlaken.* AN: Was there a name for the school on Munson Road, I mean, what did people call it? *JH: I don't remember, it was just the school on Munson corner.* AN: Same on Dugue, did that have a name? *JH: That was called the block schoolhouse.* AN: Block? *JH: B-l-o-c-k.*



**M A I L   C A L L**  
**C O M M E N T S   A N D   L E T T E R S   A N D**  
**P I C T U R E S**  
**F R O M   O U R   R E A D E R S**  
**( C O N T I N U E D   F R O M   P A G E   5 )**

Telephone message from Lynn Taber:

The President's Update in the Fall 2013 Issue of the *Backbone* included a possible scenario of a new washing machine for the family because of the good year on the farm. Without electricity in the area, it was surmised that the washing machine was powered by a gas engine. Lynn Taber called to share his recollection of his Mother's story of her dog powered washing machine. Dog powers were used for many purposes at the time. Lynn says that whenever it was time to wash the clothes the dog could not be found.



**C H R I S T M A S   O N   T H E   B A C K B O N E**  
**BY MARSHA SMITH**  
**( C O N T I N U E D   F R O M   P A G E   6 )**

at the time. Again, their holiday was spent with family and with their church community, which would have been the Townsendville Methodist Church.

**Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

Pleasant Christmas Day. Herman and Eve came down and spent the day. Tree at the Church.

**1900: Diary of Diademina Smith**

The entries for 1900 and 1901 are nearly identical. My grandfather and grandmother spent the day with Aunt Diadem, Uncle John, and my great grandmother. I don't know what The Box was or who gave it to them. It could have come from their other siblings or perhaps the Church.

**Tuesday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

A very fine day with a nice little snow storm. Herman and Eve came down and spent Christmas with us. We opened The Box. Had lots of nice presents.

**1901: Diary of Diademina Smith**

**Wednesday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

Storm some nearly all day. Herman and Eve came down and spent this Christmas day with us. Opened The Box filled with lots of nice presents.

**1919: Diary of Diademina Smith**

In 1919, Aunt Diadem spent Christmas with a friend/neighbor.

**Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

A lovely Christmas day. We spent the day with Mr. Rice's family. Had a very nice dinner. Had roast turkey. It was fine.

**1921: Diary of Diademina Smith**

Another family gathering with my grandfather and my aunt and uncles on Christmas Eve.

**Saturday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**

Snowed some all day long. Herman and family came up and spent the day for Christmas. Had a good time.

**Sunday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

Some colder. Snowed nearly all day. Looks as though we would have sleighing. If I had felt well should like to have attended church.

**1922: Diary of Herman T. Smith**

In 1922 my grandfather and family were in Florida at Christmas. He seems pretty pleased to have had Christmas Dinner on the porch. My grandfather was obviously happy to get Christmas cards from a friend and his niece, Emma Griswold.

(continued on page 9)

**1924: Family Diary-- entry by Frank Smith**

In 1924 Uncle Frank, aged 15, made the entry. By this time the diary had become a family affair and anyone

**CHRISTMAS ON THE BACKBONE**  
**BY MARSHA SMITH**  
 (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

**Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>**

Warmer. We all went to the Christmas tree at the school house. I received an ever sharp pencil, a box of candy, a necktie, a book entitled "Tom Tracy" and a comb. Edna received a hand glass and a handkerchief. Alfred a jack knife, a pencil box, a comb, a box of candy, and two erasers, Marion an ever sharp pencil, a box of candy, a comb, and a pencil box from tree. Christmas is not over with yet.

**Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

Christmas. Cold. We all went down to Uncle John's to dinner. Alfred and I received a watch, Marion a jack knife. I received a chain for my watch. Alfred and Marion each a top. Had a good time.

**1930: Family Diary-- entry by Alfred J. Smith**

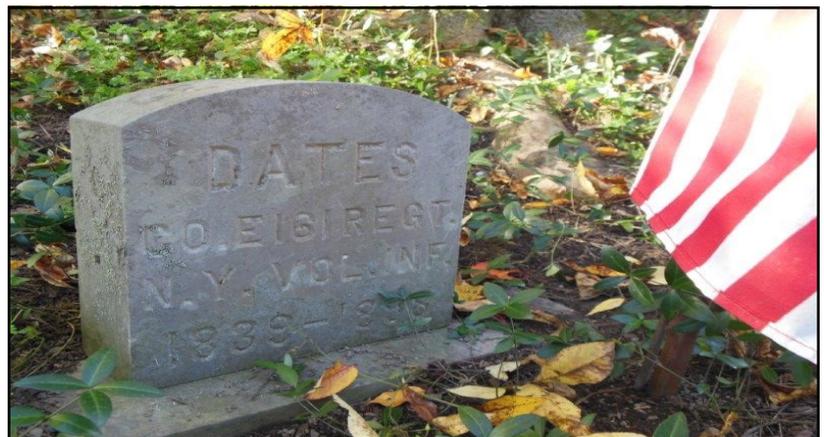
The final entry was made by my father. The family spent it with the Stricklands, who would later become Uncle Frank's in laws. He really does not have much else to say.

**Thursday, December 25<sup>th</sup>**

Christmas all went up to Stricklands and spent the day. I took Edna and Aunt Diadem down in eve.

So, in the end, Christmas was a time for friends and family to gather together and celebrate. It was a time of Hope and fellowship. If we eliminate the elaborate advertising to which we are subjected. If we really reflect on the season, and the "Reason for the Season"-- we carry on many of the same traditions-- we are just able to do it with a little more *BLING*.

**BUSY DAYS, PROGRESS AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT AT THE  
 REYNOLDSVILLE CEMETERY**  
 (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)



Top: Civil War Headstone—Dates  
 Left: Isaac Trimmer, Veteran of War of 1812

**BUSY DAYS, PROGRESS AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT AT THE  
REYNOLDSVILLE CEMETERY**  
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

Editor's Note: The following letter was received from Sharon and Mark Ricci

I wanted to thank the Backbone Ridge History Group again for all the efforts that went into the initial clean-up days at the Reynoldsville Cemetery. Everyone worked so hard no matter which task they devoted their time on. The cemetery holds so many secrets just waiting to be revealed! The effects of years of neglect, abuse and Mother Nature attempting to claim it back are seen everywhere. It will be a truly demanding effort to reclaim what has been lost for so many years. There are so many men, women and children buried there that we should identify and honor with our restoration efforts.

As we discovered during our clean-up efforts, many stones have slipped under the dirt and debris over the years. Just walking in the lower section of the cemetery, I found four "lost" headstones in a matter of minutes! I could feel something hard under my foot and when I cleared a patch of dirt and growth away, there was another stone! Other stones were found by members using a probe and then digging them up from their hiding places. I think that it is such a noble effort to find and repair the resting places of so many people that lived lives in the area and found their eternal resting place in the serenity of that cemetery. I also think it is a wonderful gesture by Mr. Robert Simpson and the VFW to honor each military veteran identified by placing flags at their graves and acknowledging that they will no longer be forgotten.

It was so amazing when I was told to look at the gravestones of 5 more of my relatives that had been discovered! We have only known of 3 family members being buried in the cemetery and have cared for their burial lot over the years. Now there are 5 more that include my great-great grandparents! It was so fantastic! If I read the stone for Sarah Dates correctly, I believe she was born in 1775. Her age is engraved way at the bottom of the stone and was not real clear in the photo that I took. I believe it said she was 71 years at the time of her death in 1846. That means she could well be my great-great-great grandmother! I really hope that her husband, Derick Dates, is buried next to her. For now, all we have is that broken chip of stone standing silently over the unknown grave. Until we find more evidence, he will remain a mystery. Just think of the time in which Derick and Sarah lived their lives! What a huge span of history there is if we could only see life through the eyes of all those souls resting on that hillside! They are truly an ancestral bridge from the past to present day life as we know it.

My husband and I are looking forward to the opportunity to return in the spring and continue to join in the efforts to restore the cemetery. We want to help make it as risk-free and safe as possible for future visitors that may want to walk thru this humble and historic resting place.

*Mark & Sharon*

---

Editor's note- Mark and Sharon Ricci came all the way from Ohio to help with the Reynoldsville Cemetery Cleanup and Restoration. They cleared leaves and small sticks with a backpack leaf blower, cut up some very large dead trees with a chain saw, hauled brush and limbs and recorded information from the stones as they were unearthed, placed on beds of crushed stone and cleaned with biocide.

**C H R I S T M A S   R E C O L L E C T I O N S   F R O M   T H E  
B A C K B O N E  
B Y   A L L A N   B U D D L E**

**John Hart Christmas**

BC: *And how about Christmas, did you go down to Ithaca to spend it with your [parents] ...?*

JH: *Usually, my dad would make me go down to Ithaca to be with the rest of the family, yes. I always didn't like to go because I know my grandfather and grandmother would be there by themselves.*

AL: *How old were they at that time, roughly?*

JH: *Probably fifties, 55.*

Editor's Note- During the tough times in the 1920's John was sent to live with his grandparents on the farm near Logan.

**Mary Louise Stilwell Christmas**

AL: *Would you tell us a little bit about how you celebrated holidays, how your family...whether you had gatherings for holidays, or how you did that?*

MLS: *Well, Christmas we always went down to my grandmothers. And that was a big event, we didn't have...if the weather, if it was winter, yeah, it was winter always Christmastime [laughing], I mean if roads were bad, we could get the horses, we'd go in the sleigh down across, we'd go down our lane and over across the field and down across the corner of the neighbor's woods and into my grandfather's sheep pasture, and down his lane and into his barn. And that was the way we got to church. Otherwise we had to go down the road and up way this way because with the horses we could just go down across and get there, but...and that was Christmas, that was about the only holiday we ever did anything special I guess.*



**M Y S T E R Y   P H O T O**

Can anyone identify the individuals in this photo and or where the photograph was taken?

Answer will follow in the Spring Edition!



**Backbone Ridge History Group**  
**PO Box 64**  
**Trumansburg, NY 14886**

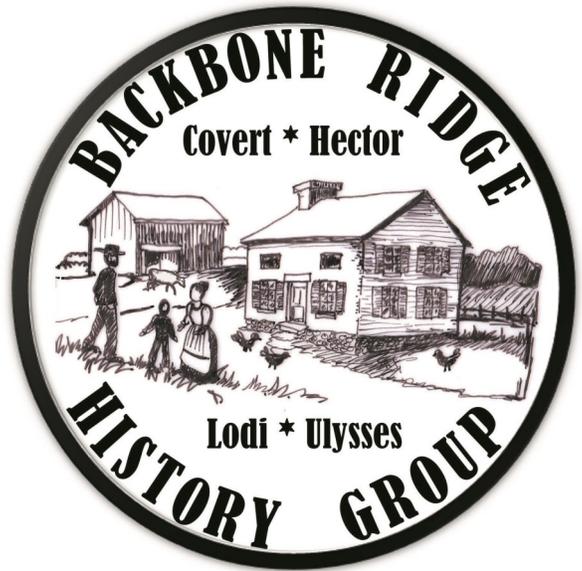
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**Backbone Ridge History Group**  
**of Schuyler and Seneca Counties**  
**PO Box 64**  
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