



Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum
3859 Main St.
Strykersville, NY 14145

Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter



An update on our progress as a Society and a Chartered Museum "A New Look at Old News From our Town"

Welcome to the Spring Edition of our newsletter! On June 1-2, we will be open all day for the Annual Strykersville Town Wide Yard Sale! Then we are open every Tuesday afternoon from 1:00-4:00 from June until October. Please contact us at: townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com or call (716)474-3156 or 863-1474. Our next meetings will be June 20 and July 18, 2024, at the Schoolhouse Museum, 7:00pm. All are welcome. Currently we are in need of helpers on Tuesday afternoons, if anyone is available.



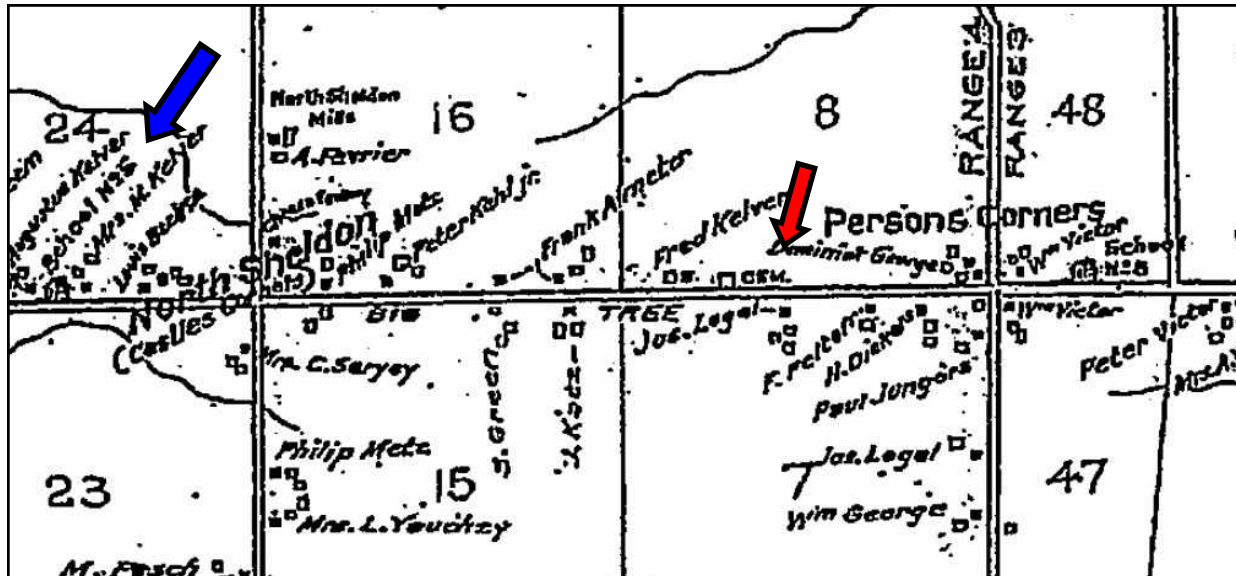
THE PERSONS PIONEER CEMETERY

BY JEANNE MEST

Nestled atop a small hill in Sheldon, Wyoming County, NY, lies the Persons Pioneer Cemetery, a hidden gem that often escapes notice unless deliberately sought. Situated along Route 20A (Big Tree Road), just west of the intersection with Route 77, this ancient graveyard sits on its perch on the north side of the highway. Established in 1809, it stands as the first cemetery in the Town of Sheldon, marking the area where the earliest settlers set foot. Over the years, it has been known by various names, including Pioneer Cemetery and Cemetery Hill, each echoing its rich history and significance to the community.

(Continued on page 2)

In the Sheldon Map of 1902, the Persons Pioneer Cemetery is marked (red arrow). Also School No. 5, Harris, is indicated in Lot 24, but by then the land on each side is owned by the Kelter family instead of the Persons. (Blue arrow) Also the corners of North Sheldon (also known as Castles Corners) and Person's Corners are marked.



Yet, what would compel anyone to take notice of this seemingly inconspicuous cemetery? Well, unknown to many, it serves as the final resting place for notable figures such as Uriah Persons, Jr., a Revolutionary War veteran, and Dr. Ziba Hamilton, a renowned surgeon of the Holland Land Company. It also holds the remains of at least eight veterans of the War of 1812; Ziba Hamilton, Uriah Persons, Jr., Uriah Persons III, Henry Persons, Elkanah Brown, Job Mathews, John Persons and Daniel Warren.

Along this very stretch of highway, the earliest settlers of Sheldon established their roots. Surveyed by the Holland Land Company, when the area opened in 1803, families began to migrate from states along the East Coast to this promising frontier. Progress was gradual; the road, once merely an old Indian path, required clearing before crops could be cultivated.

Among these pioneers were Uriah Persons, Jr., and his second wife, Mary Sesion, who arrived in Sheldon from New Jersey in 1806, with their sizable family of 12 sons and 2 daughters. The Settlement, which began with the arrival of Roswell Turner, saw the construction of the first buildings at what would later be known as Turners Corners, then Persons Corners, situated at the intersection of Big Tree and Allegany Roads. Uriah, alongside several of his sons, secured lots along Big Tree Road, to carve out their future in this growing community.

Uriah Persons had gained recognition for constructing the area's first frame house and the first tavern at Turner's Corners. However, his status as a Revolutionary War Veteran and Patriot, who served in the Morris County Militia, largely went unnoticed. Perhaps that was because it was not long before the nation's call to arms for the War of 1812. Along with several close neighbors, Uriah and four of his sons answered the call by enlisting in the Adams Regiment of New York

Volunteers. Robert attained the rank of sergeant, Joseph served as an ensign, while Uriah, John, and William served as privates. Remarkably, all five men survived the conflict.

Unfortunately, not all families shared the same fortune. Among the earliest settlers were Orange Brace and his wife Sarah Bates Brace, who migrated from Connecticut with their seven children. Orange, Marvin, Edward, and Rhoda Brace were children of Captain Abel Brace, a Revolutionary War hero who served in Connecticut in 1779.

Rhoda Brace married Levi Street, who is still remembered as the first carrier of Sheldon's mail. He became a successful merchant, owner of a stage route, and contract mail carrier by foot and with a two-horse carriage. Levi died of hydrophobia (rabies) due to a horse bite in 1831. He was well known and respected by his family, church and community.

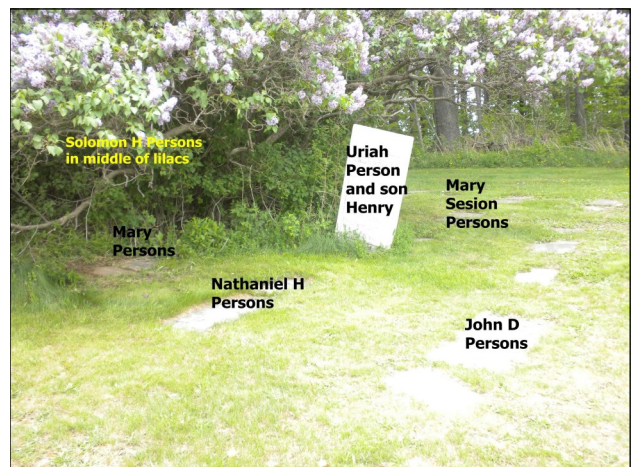
Marvin Brace became a well respected, active member of the community and the Baptist Church. He married Hannah Clark and had Nodiah C., Sarah and Esther. He died in 1810 and Hannah died in 1813.

Orange and Sarah Brace were the parents of Lester, Orange Jr., Curtis, Orpha, Linus, Savilla and Phoebe. Orange had purchased Lot 8 from the Holland Land Company, probably never thinking he would end up dedicating a portion of his property to become a cemetery when his son Curtis died on Sept. 15, 1809, at age 21. Curtis was the first burial there.

According to the Brace Lineage, at the beginning of the War of 1812, Capt. Orange Brace and his son Linus went upon the lines for guard duty in front of Buffalo. Both Orange Brace and Linus died there of an epidemic that took many. At the same time, his daughter Savilla died suddenly at the school in Canandaigua where she was attending. A few days later, the British captured and burned Buffalo. Orange Brace's son Lester went to Black Rock and operated the ferry across the Niagara River during the rest of the war. On July 25, 1814, Arden Merrill, who had married Lester's sister Orpha a month earlier, was helping Lester to ferry soldiers when he was killed by the British. Lester brought Merrill's body home. Lester Brace stayed on in Buffalo, where he was successful in business, became an alderman and served as Sheriff of Erie County from 1835-37. Orange Brace is buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo, where his son Lester purchased several graves. But Forest Lawn wasn't opened until 1849, so where was his body during that time? Quite possibly, he may have been buried originally at the Persons Cemetery and then his son may have moved him to Forest Lawn.

Edward Brace, brother of Orange, served in Capt. Marvin's NY Cavalry. Edward and his wife Lois Avery Brace had settled in Sheldon and had five children (the census indicated more).

(Continued on next page)



Both Edward and Lois died on the same day, March 1, 1813. It appears they died at the same time because records in Batavia Surrogate Court state that receipts were paid for a coffin for him and his wife, as well as the grave digger. Their cause of death is unknown, but typhoid was prevalent in those days. The fate of their children is unknown. They ranged in age from 8 to 17 years old. It is believed that Edward and Lois are buried in the Persons Pioneer Cemetery.

After the War of 1812 ended, those who survived went on to build schools and churches and helped the town develop and grow. Uriah Persons and some of the other men mentioned had many children in school, so they were active on the school board. The land for Sheldon School No. 5 in Lot 24 was donated by the Persons.

Ziba Hamilton was a native of Massachusetts, born June 10, 1769. His family moved to Vermont, where Dr. Hamilton began to practice medicine. He married Zipporah Fitch in 1793; they had two daughters, Lucy and Alta, and two sons, Cyrus Fitch and Harry. Harry Hamilton married Asenath Warren, daughter of Daniel and Rhoda Warren. Daniel Warren and his two sons, Thomas and Pomeroy, served in the War of 1812, as well as Dr. Hamilton. Daniel Warren died Sept. 12, 1812, so it may be assumed that he was also killed in the fighting.



Dr. Ziba Hamilton (1769—1855)

Dr. Hamilton and his family moved to the Town of Sheldon, Genesee County, New York before 1810. (Wyoming County was created from Genesee Co. in 1841). He was one of the first buyers of land parcels in Sheldon, acquiring lots deeded by the Holland Land Company. In 1809 and 1811, he purchased part of lot 44, Range 3 and part of lot 25, Range 4. He became a large holder of real estate, owning about half of the land from Route 20A to Centerline Road.

During the War of 1812, Dr. Ziba Hamilton served as a surgeon in the 164th Regiment (Churchill's), New York Militia. He continued to practice medicine occasionally, even when he was over 80 years old. Ziba passed away on November 25, 1855 at the age of 86. Ziba, Zipporah and their son Fitch are buried in Persons Pioneer Cemetery. He is remembered as a Pioneer Settler and the oldest living resident physician upon the Holland Purchase of Western New York. In 1930, a tablet was placed by the State Education Department on the North Sheldon Road which reads: "Here stood a log house built in 1807, home of Ziba Hamilton, physician of Holland Land Co., Surgeon in the War of 1812, Pioneer Settler".

More new changes came for the town. Immigrants from Germany, France & Belgium began arriving in the area. Some early settlers moved further westward, for free land in the 1860's.

Most of us know that "The Star-Spangled Banner" is the national anthem of the United States. But how many know our national hymn? It is "God of Our Fathers", written in 1876, when the US was celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence. You might recognize it by the trumpets that are played at the beginning of each verse.



Uriah Persons Jr., 1763-1842, age 79.

Uriah Pearson/Person/Pierson is listed in the DAR Patriot Index, Ancestor # A087219. He served as a private in the Morris Co. Militia, Morris Co., New Jersey. DAR Member Amanda Pierson Rudd traced her ancestry back from her parents, Almira Pierson and Clark Reynolds, to her grandparents Uriah Persons and Mary Greene, to her great grandparents, Uriah Persons and Elizabeth Dalrymple. DAR spells the last name as Pearson but it is also shown as Persons and Pierson. He was born in New Jersey; came to Sheldon in 1806 and built the first tavern and the first frame house at Persons Corners.

Mary Session Persons, wife of Uriah Jr. Born Sep 1768 Died 1 May 1856, age 87



Persons family members who are buried in Persons Pioneer Cemetery:

- Uriah Persons, Jr.
- Mary Sesion, 2nd wife of Uriah Persons, Jr.
- Henry Persons, son of Uriah Jr. and Elizabeth Persons
- John D. Persons, son of Uriah Jr. and Elizabeth Persons
- Nathaniel H. Persons, son of John & Mary Ann Persons
- Mary Greene Persons, wife of Uriah Persons III
- Solomon Persons, son of Uriah Persons III and Mary Greene Persons

The **Federation Spring Workshop** went very well and we learned a great deal from historic stone mason **Brian Daddis**, who agreed to take a detour on his way home and give us his opinion on the work we would like to do in the Pioneer Cemetery. We ended up asking him to come and help us do some restoration the right way, so he came on Sat., May 11 and our cemetery committee joined him there to watch his methods as well as starting the spring cleanup. It is very rewarding to wash off the old stones with D2 and see the words and designs that were hidden! We are so excited to see people are interested in preserving this historic cemetery! We hope to make it a very nice place for visitors to come and search for their ancestors and honor our first settlers and veterans. We have started a special fund to go toward the expenses. Janet Hobin has donated a beautiful hand made quilt and quilt rack for us to hold a Raffle to raise funds for the preservation of the **Strykersville Pioneer Cemetery. Thank you, Janet!**

Let us know if you are interested in helping with our cemetery restoration project. We appreciate the help! Please don't attempt these repairs on your own. We want to make sure things are done correctly to preserve what is left of these very old tombstones.



Sheldon Historical Society
Quilt Raffle
 Handmade Queen size quilt
 and quilt rack
 Drawing to held on Thursday
 October 17th, 2024
 \$5.00 per ticket

From Historical Wyoming, Vol. VII, No. 3, April 1954

PIONEER CEMETERY, SHELDON, ROUTE 20A

This abandoned graveyard, west of North Sheldon, on present Route 20A, was probably the first opened in the township, but apparently not used after the Civil War period. Located on the north side of the highway at the brow of a hill, the grounds are several feet above the present road level and little care has been given them in recent years. The stones are scattered and broken, while bushes have overgrown much of the site. The first settlement was made in this area in 1804.

- BRACE Curtis, son Capt. Orange & Sarah Brace, d. Sept. 15, 1809, 21y.
- BROWN Elkanah Brown, d. Feb. 5, 1863, 73y 6m 5d.
Sarah, wife Elkanah, d. July 23, 1855, 67y.
- BUELL John L. Buell, d. Sept. 8, 1833, 31st yr.
- CASTLE Dyer, son Amos H. & Ann Phillips Castle, d. Sept. 19, 1834,
5m 7d.
- DONDERSON Sabrah, wife Nelson O. Donderson, d. Jan 21, 1844, 23y.
- DONELSON Sarah L., dau. Nelson O. & Sabra Donelson, d. Aug. 1, 1872,
28y. (What appears to be a stone for her mother,
has the family name spelled "Donderson.")
- DUNBAR Charles, died 1847, no age given.
Esther, wife Dana Dunbar, d. July 22, 1839, 71y.
- HAMILTON Dr. Ziba Hamilton, d. Nov. 23, 1855, 87th yr. (He came to
Sheldon in 1809, and continued occasionally to
practice medicine even after his 80th year.)
Zipporah, wife Dr. Ziba, d. April 1, 1843, 72y.
Cyrus F. Hamilton, d. Feb. 24, 1844, 48y.
- MATHEWS Job N Mathews, son Job R. & Harriet, d. July 3, 1835, 12y.
- PARSONS Uriah Persons, d. March 11, 1842, 79y. (He was born in New
Jersey in 1763; came to Sheldon in 1806, and built the
first tavern & frame house at Persons' Corners.)
Mary (Sesion), wife Uriah, d. May 1, 1856, 88y. (Native
of Conn., and his second wife by whom he had three
children.)
Henry, son Uriah, d. Sept. 26, 1819, 19y
Solomon, son Uriah, d. Nov. 16, 1861, 41y 7m
John Persons, d. July 21, 1849, 56y. (Son of Uriah.)
Nathaniel H., son John D. & Mary Ann Persons, d. July 27,
1843, 22y
Mary, wife Uriah Persons (Jr.), d. Jan 11, 1854, 66y
- POWERS William H., son Lyman L. & Savilla, d. June 12, 1844, 1y 8m
- REES Sally E., dau. David & Sally Rees, d. Mar. 10, 1813, 2y 3m.
- WARREN Daniel Warren, d. Sept. 12, 1812, 44y.
R. H. _____, wife Daniel, d. June 8, 1846, 80y. (Stone broken)
Thomas Warren, d. July 29, 1824, 30y.
- BRACE Edward Brace, Lois Brace, both died March 1, 1813 (added in 2024)

THE OLD BREWERY CAVE CELLAR

FROM MANUSCRIPT GUIDE OF WYOMING COUNTY (REPRINT)

BY FLOYD H. BENHAM, HISTORICAL WYOMING, JULY 2006



Turning south on Hamilton Road, [North Sheldon Road] which is halfway between Harris Corners and Turner's Corners on Route 20A, then proceeding three miles, or one-half mile south of Straub's Corners, on the present Armbrust farm, one comes to the old brewery cave cellar.

This cave, 18 X 48 feet, is native stone arched in the side of a bank of pasture land beside a small stream. It was built in the early part of the 19th Century, together with a brewery building directly to the east of it, two stories high. This building was 40 X 70 feet, with stone arches, under large vats that contained touch metal screens.

John Fontaine was the original proprietor of this brewery and cave, selecting this remote spot on account of the quality of the springs and water wells nearby. The wells and springs may still be located today.

In 1875 the old brewery burned, but was rebuilt, the cave was improved and brewing continued up until about 1908, when the business was discontinued and the brewery was taken down. Thomas Bettendorf operated the brewery after 1874.

During the many years of the operation of this business, the countryside around Straub's Corners, the picturesque Dutch Hollow to the west, Humphrey's Hollow to the east and around Strykersville to the south, was fragrant in the summer and fall from the many fields of hops. There were also fields full of barley. Many hop pickers were required during the appropriate season.

The reason for this activity in agriculture was to supply this and the Strykersville brewery with hops and barley for malt. The brewing of beer was all done in the autumn and early winter, from spring water, hops and barley only. It was then placed in great casks in the even temperatured, cool and damp cave, where it was thus kept for nine months before it was "racked" off for use. It is said to have been a very pure and excellent product of its kind. This cave is now used for storing potatoes, but is admirably adapted for the curing of various kinds of cheese as is done in many similar places in France.

(Original References: Frank Hipps, now using the Cave, Mr. Clemens and Mr. Straub of Straub's corners. And the writer's observations.)

[This article was reprinted in 2006 from a Historical Wyoming series by Floyd Benham several years earlier. It is included here since it has extra details. My research shows the original owner as Desire, father of John Fontaine.]

THE BREWERY CELLAR, PART 2

BY JEANNE MEST

When we published our January issue, I was still searching for answers about the mysterious brewery cellar. Shortly after, I ran across an article about it in *Historical Wyoming* from July, 2006, which appears on Page 7. Then I had a call from historian Anita Ripstein Hayes, who had delved into the history of this property and discovered the identity of the first known owner of the brewery.

Desire Fontaine, his wife Genevieve and their two young children Emilie and Desire (John D.), left their home in France and arrived in America on the Ship Poland, on April 14, 1840. His brother, Ferdinand, was on the same ship. Another brother, Peter Fontaine, arrived later and appears in the 1860 Census. These three men were the sons of Etienne Joseph Fontaine and Sophie Lesen of Wignehies, Nord, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France. These may be the ancestors of the present day Fontaine family but I have not seen their family tree.

New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957 for Dessie Fontaine

Date > 1840 > April > 14 > Poland

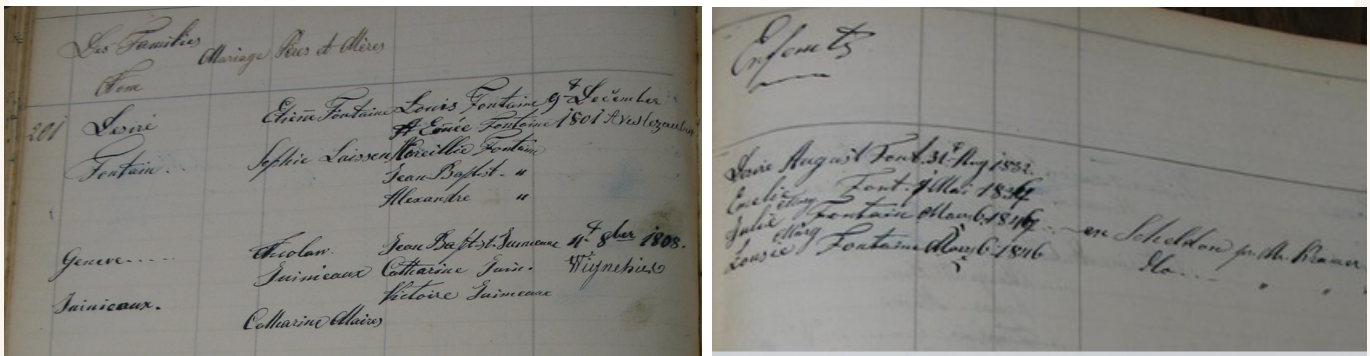
Desire Fontaine	38	Mr.	France
Genevieve	31	W.	
Desire	8	"	
Emilie	3	"	
Thos. Lefort	42	Mr.	
Jane. Fignon	19	"	
Thos. Dumas	42	"	
Kath.	37	W.	

Several of the names of the emigrants accompanying them on the journey had familiar Sheldon names, including Dumas, Lefort and Keem. Desire's unusual name, Dezera, is spelled differently in almost every record, as Dezire, Dezra, Dezera, Dezier, and Desiderious.

Desire purchased 50 acres in Lot No. 19 on October 15, 1840, from Nelson Arnold, building a brewery and a tavern. His brothers were farmers and settled nearby.

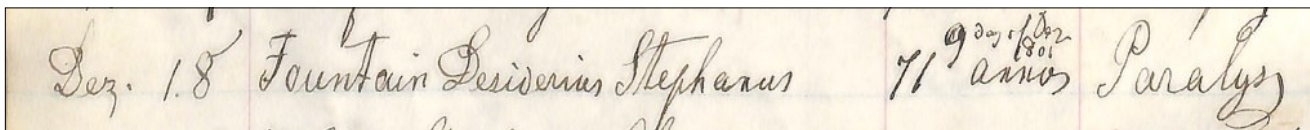
THIS INDENTURE, Made this *Fifteenth* day of *October* —
 in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty — BETWEEN *Nelson Arnold and Polly his wife*
 of *Sheldon* — — — — — in the County of *Genesee* — — — — — and State of *New-York*, of
 the first part, and *Dezera Fountain late of the Kingdom of France but now of Sheldon* ^{County & State aforesaid} of the second part,
 Witnesseth, That the said party of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of *nine hundred dollars*

[This indenture, made the fifteenth day of October, 1840, between Nelson Arnold and Polly his wife of Sheldon and Dezera Fountain, late of the Kingdom of France but now of Sheldon, Genesee County, New York.....]



Family Records at St. Cecilia's Roman Catholic Church, Sheldon, NY

Desire identifies himself as a brewer in each Federal Census. In 1850 he shows \$3,000 as his value in real estate, with \$7,000 in 1860. Twins Lucy and Julia were born in Sheldon in 1846. Daughter Emily married Jacob Zwetsch and is living at home with a son, John, age 2, in the 1860 Census. Son John D. Fontaine married Elizabeth Browner and had seven children. He was a cooper and farmer, and operated the brewery along with his father, but he died at a young age of 46 in 1878. Sometime after Genevieve's death in 1864, Desire went to live with their daughter Emily and her husband Jacob Zwetsch in Akron, NY, until he passed away in 1872 and was buried at St. Cecilia's.



St. Cecilia's interment Record for Desire Fontaine (1801-1872)

Thomas Bettendorf purchased the property and operated the brewery. He obtained a tavern license in 1860, which indicates there was a tavern or hotel there. He is shown as a brewer and farmer in the Wyoming Co. Directory of 1870, as well as a Commissioner of Highways.

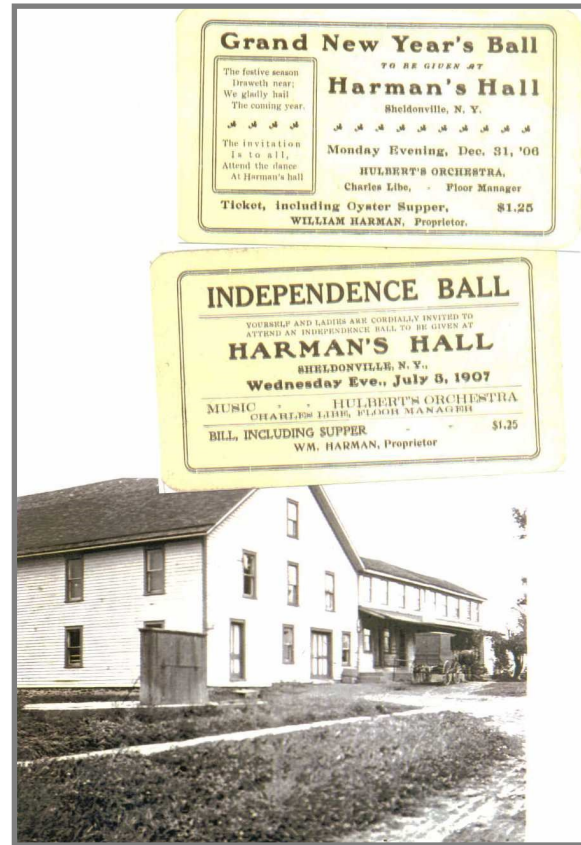
An article in Historical Wyoming, April 1954, states that "Near Straub's Corners was an ancient distillery and one of the first, if not the first brewery". Named after early settler Nicholas Straub, Straub's Corners was located just north of the brewery, at the corner of Centerline and Straub's Corners Road (today known as Bartz and North Sheldon Road.) It was also known as Sheldonville. The close distance to the corners makes me wonder if the Fontaine or the Bettendorf Brewery supplied or stored alcohol for the hotels there. Nicholas Straub and his wife, Dorothea Pabst (Pope) built a tavern just east of St. Cecilia's Church (now the home of Charles and Judy Perl), the Sheldonville Hotel. They became so successful they built another tavern at Straub's Corners, the Sheldon Hotel, and sold the first one to their son, who operated it as the Farmer's Hotel and Store. After it changed hands a couple of times, William Harmon purchased the property and it was very successful as Harmon's Hotel. They added a dance floor on the second floor that could hold 200 people, with bowling alleys underneath. They became famous for their late night suppers for only \$1.50 per couple. Although the hotels were close by each other, Harmon's Hotel and the Sheldon Hotel were both very successful and popular. Unfortunately both hotels came to the same end. In March 1918, Harmon's Hotel burned to the ground and in March 1981, the Sheldon Hotel was destroyed by fire.

An article in Wyoming County Times in 1891 states that "Thomas Bettendorf has rented H. Faber's Saloon and will shortly remove his family into Mrs. M. Metzger's house" and in 1892 the paper says he will be the new proprietor of the Scheer Hotel at Sheldon Center. Sheldon Center was located east of

Sheldonville, at the corner of what is now Route 77 and Centerline Roads, where the town building is today. In March 1924, the Batavia Daily News reported that the Sheldon Center Hotel had been sold and the building was being remodeled to manufacture Sweitzer cheese.

It seems like there were many taverns in the town, but travel took so much longer in those days, it was necessary to have places to stay. During the early decades of the 1800's, hotels and taverns were also public meeting places as well as providing comfortable accommodations for the weary traveler.

In the years to come, the old brewery cellar and the land on which it remains was to change owners many times. In the 1940's it was owned by the Armbrusts and used as a cellar to store cider and apples. It is interesting to speculate about what it would be like to explore, but since it is on private property it is not an option, so we can only imagine.



“Harmon’s Hotel was on Centerline Road where Charles Perl lives. Gene was born and brought up there. It was owned by his father William. It burned in March 1918. There was a bowling alley in part of it. Dances were held upstairs, \$1.50 a couple. They served oyster stew. Beer, wine and whiskey was 5 cents. There was all kinds of food for a midnight supper and an orchestra from Buffalo. The dining room could serve 50 couples at once. “

From the *Memories of Ceal McCoy*

OPEN UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT !!!

SHELDON HOTEL

MEALS SERVED NIGHTLY !
Fish, Shrimp, Chicken and Steak

Round & Square Dancing every other Saturday

Next dance March 12, 1966
Meet your friends at the Sheldon Hotel

The GALAPAGOS

EASTER MONDAY

Yourself and Lady are cordially invited to attend a Farewell Party for the season, to be given at

W. HARMAN'S HALL,
Sheldon, N. Y.

Monday Evening, March 26, 1894

Music, Sheldon Orchestra.
John Victor, Floor Manager.

BILL, 25 CENTS. Free Lunch will be served.
By order of M. I. S. O.

Many records remain with advertisements of these popular hotels.

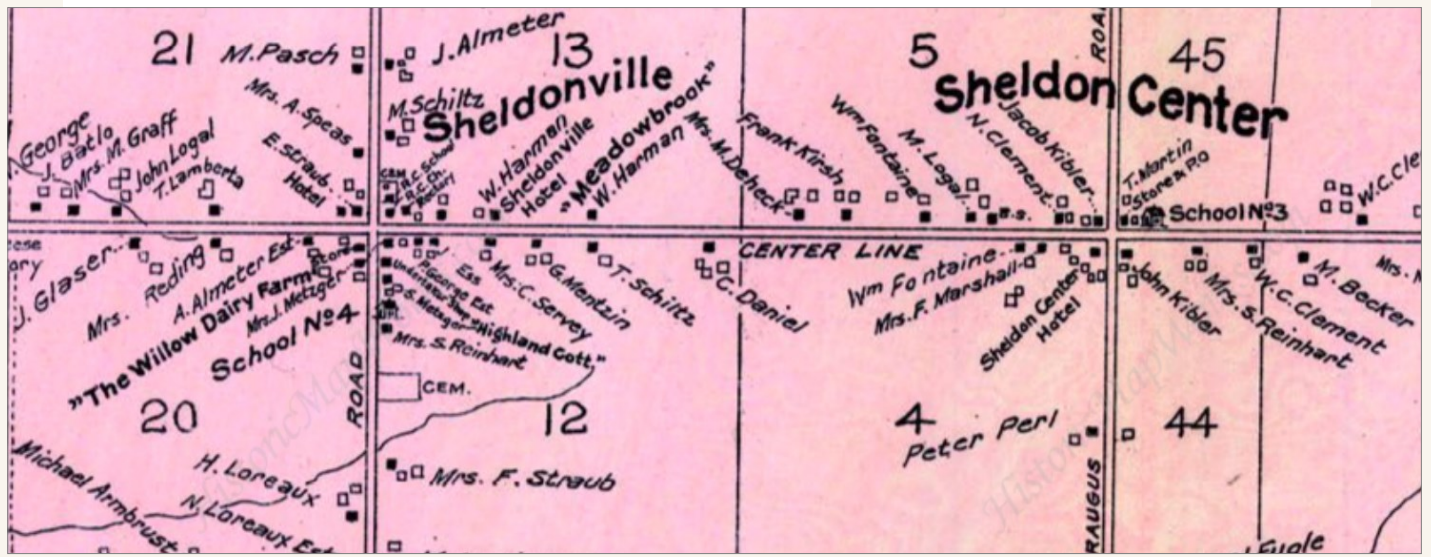
SHELDON.

SHELDONVILLE HOTEL,
Wm. Harman, Proprietor,
SHELDON, N. Y.

This hotel is pleasantly located on Center Line Road between Johnsonburg and East Aurora, and is one of the oldest licensed hotels in town, its existence extending over a period of sixty-five years. Large barns are connected with the house, also a fertile farm of sixty-five acres, on which hay and grain are raised for the use of the hotel. The barns are commodious, containing stable room for seventy-five horses. The traveling public will find Sheldonville Hotel a delightful resting place, with good table service and other conveniences common to a first-class hotel.

Mr. Harman is a man of large experience. He was born in Sheldon in 1845, and married Miss Mary Pery, of his native village, in 1869. He is the son of the late Nicholas Harman, who died at Churchville, Iowa, in 1865. Politically, Mr. Harman, is a Democrat and has filled all the different offices from Constable to Supervisor.

The farm in connection with this hotel is known as "Meadow Brook." It is watered by a small creek flowing through the farm and wells located at the house. The soil is exceedingly fertile.



JOHN R. POTTER, ART PHOTOGRAPHER AND CIVIL WAR VETERAN

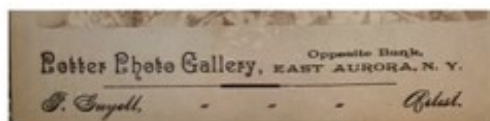
BY TAINA ARMSTRONG HOFFMAN

In July of 2023, a presentation was given by Taina Armstrong Hoffman, lifetime member and active volunteer of the Sheldon Historical Society. The subject was John R. Potter, photographer, Civil War Veteran, and former resident of Sheldon. Throughout the presentation, tools and research techniques were referenced to show attendees how even seemingly sparse census records, such as the 1840 census can further one's genealogy research. And now, a peak into the life of John R. Potter:

An active and prominent photographer in Buffalo and East Aurora, NY during the 19th century, John R. Potter, the 8th child of Zebina & Nancy (Davis) Potter, was born July 22, 1839 in Strykersville. Zebina purchased 11 acres of land in the Town of Sheldon, County of Genesee, Lot No 35, T. 9, R. 4. from Samuel Kelsey in 1835. Zebina later acquired more acreage in Sheldon and was listed as a farmer on census records throughout his life.

The 1840 Federal Census of Sheldon, Genesee, New York reveals there were nine people living in the Potter household.

Two of Zebina's children, Elizabeth and William, died young prior to the 1840 census. The ninth person in the Potter household was John's grandfather, Joseph Potter, a Revolutionary War Veteran.

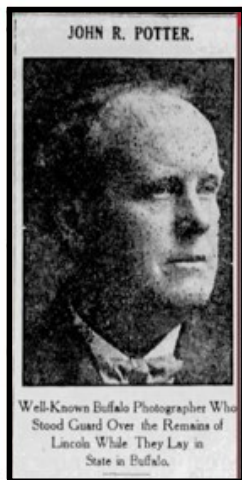


When John was just a boy of ten years, the family lost his mother to lung fever [pneumonia] and she had been sick for 21 days.

By 1860, John relocated to East Aurora with his father. Some of Zebina Potter's children attended the prestigious Aurora Academy, which offered a broad range of subjects and was known for its rigorous academic standards and emphasis on moral education preparing its graduates for college, roles in teaching, and business. John's sister, Calista, was a dressmaker, John's brother, Asa, was an attorney and post master in Brighton, Illinois. John's brother, James H. was a school teacher in Minnesota and Illinois who returned to the area and married Lucina Reed. John became a photographer.

In 1862, John moved to Buffalo, NY. Throughout his career, JR Potter's studio addresses and business partners varied and included notable locations on Main Street in both Buffalo and East Aurora. The 323 Main Street Studio sounds nothing short of amazing.

The Industries of Buffalo, published in 1887, has this to say about John R. Potter, Photographer, "None of the arts come nearer to our homes and affections than does photography.... One of the most accomplished and skillful members of the profession of whom we have any knowledge is Mr. John R. Potter, whose fine studio and gallery of art occupy the third and fourth floors of the handsome building No. 323 Main Street. These rooms are 25 by 80 feet in dimensions, beautifully lighted, and fitted up in the completest and most attractive manner-the operating apartment and studio with all the latest improved and most effective apparatus and appliances, the gallery elegantly furnished and attractive with a display of rare gems of photography which attest the taste and skill exercised in their production and arrangement...He is a popular gentleman, studious and attentive, and in every way a successful and prosperous man."



The mark often found on the back of Potter's cabinet cards reads: "art photographer."

Both John R. Potter and his brother James H. Potter (Sargent Major, 100 days, 133rd Infantry, Illinois) enlisted on the side of the Union and served in the Civil War. "[John R Potter] was a member of Company B of the 74th Regiment for seven years and was one of the guards of President Lincoln, when the body of the martyred President lay in state at St. James' Hall. In fraternal circles, Mr. Potter was well known and was for many years a member of Orient Lodge No 1, A. O. U. W."

The 1880 Non Population Schedule is a wealth of information for products of industry for the City of Buffalo. It captures capital invested, number of hands employed including children and youth, hours worked, wages paid for skilled labor, value of materials, value of product, what type of power was used, etc. It's worth the effort when researching to comb through every page of the census.

Legend has it that John R Potter took individual photos of the Buffalo Bisons in 1888, including Hall-of-Famer Frank Grant. What a find these photos would be!

John R Potter's third great grandfather was a third cousin to President George Washington.

Another interesting tidbit, found in The Buffalo Commercial newspaper dated 1899 states, "John R. Potter, photographer at 252 Main street, who before the introduction of the Bertillon system did a good deal of photographing for the police department..."

Joseph Jenks, Potter's fifth great grandfather, secured multiple patents, including the First Patent in the American Colonies, on May 10, 1646. Joseph Jenks also built a forge and made the dies for the first silver money coined in New England.

Many examples of John R. Potter's photography work can be found locally. There are a few unidentified photos taken by JRP in the Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum, about a dozen or so in the Buffalo History Museum photo collection, and many held by Potter family members, namely the descendants of his brother James H Potter.

One newspaper article (The Buffalo Times, 1902), describes John as a phoenix, "having been burned out and risen again to the surface with perfect equanimity, and looks very little older than he did in the old times when he used to photograph some of the gay crowds who plotted political battles in little pools of lager beer and other even more dangerous fluids in Port Hickox's near which his gallery was located..."

John R. Potter and his wife Ellen had two children: George who died at age seven and is buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery and Helen Maude Potter (1879-1955) who married George Robert Feine (1884-1952), a Royal Arch Mason, vice president and treasurer of August Feine & Sons Company, which made ornamental iron works and operated a structural steel plant in Buffalo. Additionally, Potter's son-in-law was president of Buffalo Ankerite Mines, and director of gold mines in Canada.

It is clear that the artistic photography work done by John R. Potter contributed to the visual documentation and local history of the era. This Potter line is deeply rooted in the rich tapestry of American history.

John R. Potter died on July 15, 1909, a week before his 70th birthday, and is buried in the Strykersville Cemetery on Sanders Hill Rd, alongside the Potter family.

So, whatever happened to all those glass negatives? Answer: "the veteran camera artist sold about twenty thousand negatives for old glass, passing them thus into the shadow for evermore."



For more information on the life of John R. Potter or help dating your JR Potter photos, please contact the author, Taina Armstrong Hoffman at TainaHoffman@icloud.com. Please credit the author and cite your source when sharing what you've learned from this article. Requested permission appreciated.

The Buffalo Times, Buffalo, New York · Friday, July 16, 1909, obituary of John R Potter, page 5
 Year: 1840; Census Place: Sheldon, Genesee, New York; Roll: 285; Page: 187; Image: 197; Family History Library
 Film: 0017188; Repository: ancestry.com
U.S., Revolutionary War Pensioner Census, 1840 [database on-line].
 Original data: A Census of Pensioners for Revolutionary or Military Services. Repository: ancestry.com
 Mortality schedule, 1850 Federal Census, Sheldon, Wyoming, New York
 New York, State Census, 1865. Repository: ancestry.com
 Buffalo City Directories (1863-1909). Repository: Grosvenor Room, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
Industries of Buffalo, pages 99-100
<https://ia800904.us.archive.org/16/items/industriesofbuff00har/industriesofbuff00har.pdf>
 Buffalo History Museum has paper copy. Digitized by Library of Congress. pages 99-100
 M539 roll 72, National Park Service. U.S., Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865. Repository: ancestry.com
The Buffalo Times, Buffalo, New York · Friday, July 16, 1909, obituary of John R Potter, page 5
 Census Year: 1880; Census Place: Buffalo, Erie, New York; Archive Collection Number: I10; Roll: 86;
 Page: 542; Line: 15. Repository: ancestry.com
[https://www.newspapers.com/image/269445033/?match=1&terms="Potter, photographer"](https://www.newspapers.com/image/269445033/?match=1&terms=)
<https://www.nps.gov/sair/learn/historyculture/upload/08Chapter7-508x.pdf>
 The Buffalo Times, Thu. May 29, 1902, page 4



THE AMERICAN FLAG A CONTINUOUS SYMBOL OF FREEDOM

The Flag is much more than the material that binds us to it, it is a living symbol of our nation's greatest victories and darkest struggles. Sown in between each thread of red, white, and blue lives the blood, sweat, and tears that went into making the United States the great nation that it is.

Some Holidays to Display the Flag:

January 1: New Year's Day

Third Monday in January: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 20: Inauguration Day

February 12: Lincoln's Birthday

February 22: Washington's Birthday

Third Monday in February: Presidents' Day

April 6: Army Day

Second Sunday in May: Mother's Day

May 15: Peace Officers Memorial Day

Third Saturday in May: Armed Forces Day

Last Monday in May: Memorial Day (To pay tribute to those that died while serving in the U.S. military. Flags are flown at half-mast until noon, then raised until sunset.)

June 14: Flag Day (Commemorates the adoption of the American Flag in 1777.)

July 4: Independence Day (Marks the beginning of the United States of America.)

July 27: Korean War Veterans Day

First Monday in September: Labor Day

September 11: Patriot Day (To commemorate those who died in the 2001 terrorist attacks.)

September 17: Constitution Day

September 17: Air Force Day

First Sunday in October: National Firefighters Memorial Day

October 12: Indigenous Peoples' Day/Columbus Day

October 27: Navy Day

First Tuesday in November: Election Day

November 11: Veterans Day (To honor the services of all veterans, past and present.)

Fourth Thursday in November: Thanksgiving Day

December 7: Pearl Harbor Day

For more details, please see:

<https://nationalflagfoundation.org/etiquette/holiday-guide-to-flying-the-american-flag/>

AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL OUR 250TH BIRTHDAY

BY JEANNE MEST

As we approach this 4th of July, we are already hearing about July 4, 2026, which will be the 250th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence. Historians and historical societies hope to encourage our communities to celebrate this Semiquincentennial.

It is so important that the **Geneseo Center for Local and Municipal History at SUNY Geneseo** has joined together with the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation to form the **Gardiner Foundation Semiquincentennial Summer Fellowship Program**. They offered fellowships, or internships, to 50 students from seven colleges and universities across NYS, to work with government-appointed historians and local historical societies for 150 hours during the summer of 2024. Their goal is to work on projects to commemorate the 250th Anniversary in hopes that it will bring about a more historically informed public and a deeper understanding of the American Revolution.

WELCOME, EMMA!

We have been chosen as one of those historical societies! Our new intern is **Emma Johnson**, a junior at Canisius College who is studying to become a history teacher. As soon as she finished her spring semester, she was eager to begin, so we met her on Saturday, May 11, the day several of our members worked at the Pioneer Cemetery with Brian Daddis on our restoration project.

Emma will be working on a few projects and also able to assist us with the many jobs that need to be caught up. One of her plans is to interview several of the older residents of our town and record some of their stories and put them in a presentation. She may do the same with some videos of the Schoolhouse Museum, which could be used as a kind of virtual museum for those who cannot make the trip there in person. There are more possibilities but we are still in the planning stage. She will be here until August, and will be able to help us out at the Town Wide Yard Sale and on the Tuesday afternoons in the summer when we are open to the public. Our

plan is to work at the museum on a regular basis on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so we may be open more often.

THE BICENTENNIAL

Many of us can remember the Bicentennial, in 1976, which celebrated our country's 200th Birthday. It is special for us in the Town of Sheldon because that event played a part in establishing the Sheldon Historical Society and the renovation of the Schoolhouse Museum. We still have a few active charter members, who were fifty years younger back then! They did an outstanding job in planning celebrations, parades and contests. That was the year that Mrs. Josephine Almeter completed her hand-typed History of the Town of Sheldon, the "Red Book" we still sell at our museum.

A friend who came very recently to live in the US was saying how thankful he and his family are to be here. I was surprised to learn that in their country, you have to pay for education. Elementary education! The cost to send three children to school for a month would be the same amount they would pay for a month's rent. Impossible for someone without a very high level of income. They had to homeschool because they could not afford the public school. This is just one example of how blessed we are in this country and how wise the leaders were who began our country, because free public school education started very early in our country; Most schools were tuition free by the early 1800's.

We also realized from talking with our friends, that they have no knowledge of our patriotic holidays and traditions, so we described the reasons for the 4th of July, Memorial Day and Veterans Day and the tradition of putting flags and flowers on the graves every Memorial Day. This began after the Civil War, when grieving mothers and widows began decorating their loved one's graves (originally known as Decoration Day). Programs are put on by various organizations such as the American Legion.

In fact, this **Memorial Day**, the **Strykersville Six Star American Legion** will observe one of their ceremonies at the Pioneer Cemetery, after learning that several veterans are buried there from the **Revolutionary War** and the **War of 1812!**

We confused them further with Veterans Day, the day to honor the soldiers of all branches of the service. Its origin was Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, to honor the veterans of World War I, but the word "Armistice" was changed to "Veterans" to honor all Veterans, who deserve to be recognized for their bravery and patriotism.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

THE UNANIMOUS DECLARATION OF THE THIRTEEN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

"When in the course of human events, ..."

My friend had attended a church service shortly after arriving here, when some patriotic hymns were sung. He was puzzled that we would be in church singing about our country. Not realizing the history, how our founding fathers believed and trusted God for all they did in their lives, that He would guide and protect them; that their cause was just and right, and courageous. We cannot imagine how much courage it took the signers of the Declaration of Independence when they said, **"For the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor"**. They knew they could literally lose their lives due to this document.

There aren't enough words to explain patriotism; the way you feel about this country when you grow up here. The little thrill of devotion that stirs in your breast, when you hear the Star-Spangled Banner, see the flag flying or envision your ancestors taking up arms and fighting their oppressors. Or when you sing, "O beautiful, for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain." The words to America the Beautiful tell the stories of those patriots; "Oh beautiful, for heroes proved, who more than selves, their country loved, and mercy more than life".

You can't make someone feel that way and I don't know if they can even understand, not from our point of view of course. But they know what coming here has meant to their family. They thank God daily for bringing them here. They remember the unfair laws from their homeland and appreciate the new freedoms they have here. Their children realize this as well, and none of them will be quick to forget this. **Although they won't experience it personally, their grandchildren will.** They will go to school and learn about the history of America and it will be their history. They will color pictures, learn patriotic songs and perform them on Flag Day; they will plan events like Memorial Day and Veterans Day, to honor those who served in the armed forces that protect them and to thank God always for their blessings.

*"Oh thus be it ever when free men shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven rescued land,
Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto - "In God is our trust,"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."*

*Francis Scott Key, September 14, 1914
(The fourth and less familiar verse)*

**If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace.
Thomas Paine**

We hope to see you at the Town Wide Yard Sale June 1 & 2. Come in and visit our museum and enjoy the music of Don Dwyer at 1:00 PM on Saturday.

The basket raffle will be drawn at 1:00 PM on Sunday. You don't have to be there but if you win, we will call you and hopefully you can pick up your winning basket.

33rd Annual Townwide YARD SALE
STRYKERSVILLE, NY
 Sponsored by the SHELDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
JUNE 1 & 2 2024
Saturday & Sunday from 9am to 3pm
 Vendors & Inquiries, call Barb @ 716-863-1474 or Judy @ 585-457-3444

At the SCHOOLHOUSE
 Restored Classroom
 Come enjoy story time in the classroom
 World War I & II
 -Music of the Civil War w/Don Dwyer
 1pm Saturday
 Historian available for Information
 Sheldon & Orangeville History Display

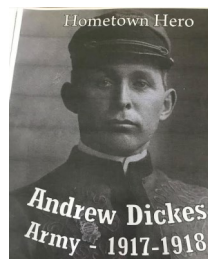
Theme Basket Raffle
 Flower & Plant Sales
Boy Scouts: HOTDOG Stand

Limited Flea spaces available
Antiques..Bargains..Prime Junque
Good Food...Great Fun

Around the Town:
Mason's: Sausage & Fries
Charlotte House: Walking Taco
Stryk. Fire Co: Ice Cream
St. Marys: Baked Goods (Sat only)
Flip Side: Breakfast served 8-11.
PIG Roast & brisket Music 11.30-?
Rt.78 Pub: Lunch specials
Logel Appliance: Ding & Dent Sale
Stry.Hardware: Blowout: junk & hardware
Town of Java Historical Museum OPEN
Sunday Only: American Legion
Chicken BBQ 11:30-??

Memorial Day Programs from the Strykersville Six Star American Legion Post 637
 Please try to come out for the Memorial Day services held by the Legion at these cemeteries, especially at the Pioneer Cemetery, where they will be coming to present for the first time!

We want to thank the Legion and especially Noelle Pitkin for presenting the Sheldon Historical Society with a copy of the Six Star Memorial Book which she created to give to the families of each soldier who gave their life in World War I. It is a beautiful book and will be a great resource to anyone looking for this information. Noelle was able to find information and photos of these soldiers that had never been seen before. Noelle is also credited with organizing the hometown heroes banners, which she not only fundraised for but also designed and hung throughout the town.



These are the 6 soldiers that the Legion Post is named for.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Memorial Day Service 5/27 luncheon to follow
- June BBQ 6/2
- Strykersville Fireman's Parade 7/13 7pm
- Pike Grand Parade 8/12/24 7pm

MEMORIAL DAY CEMETERY SCHEDULE

- 8:00 Assemble at Legion Post
- 8:30 Depart Legion (by bus)
- 9:00 Java Center
- 9:30 Johnsonburg
- 10:00 Varysburg
- 10:30 North Java
- 10:55 Sheldon
- 11:20 Dutch Hollow
- 11:50 Pioneer Cemetery (Perry Rd & Rt 78) (new)
- 12:15 Java Village
- 12:30 Strykersville
- 1:00 Ceremony and Meal at Post

FROM THE SHELDON SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM AND HISTORIAN, JEANNE MEST

Thank you to all those who continue to support us by sending in your membership dues and donations. It helps a lot with expenses, especially the newsletters and scholarships. Whenever you give a donation in honor or memory of someone, we will send a note to let the family know.

A special **Thank You to the Java Strykersville Lions Club** for their generous donation and their help with the cemetery cleanup!

I would also like to thank Clarence Conrad for all his help in scanning and digitizing our records.

Welcome to our first overseas member, **Marcelyn Scherer** of France! Marcelyn is a descendant of the families of Glaser, Linn, Schunk, Dehlinger, to name a few. A special welcome to Marcelyn.

Now is the perfect time to renew your membership or sign up if you have not already done so. If you will come into the Schoolhouse Museum during the Town Wide Sale, you will get a gift with your membership or renewal.

We have been very busy at the Schoolhouse getting ready for our **Annual Town Wide Sale**, coming up very soon on **June 1—2**. It is one of the highlights of our year and the funds raised go to our Scholarship Fund and to the maintenance of our museum and the cost of mailing the newsletters.

We give a **\$500 Scholarship** to a student at each of the three high schools represented in the Town of Sheldon; **Pioneer, Holland and Attica**. Winners have been chosen for this year but cannot be announced until the schools give out the scholarships at their award ceremonies. Applications for next year are available at our Schoolhouse office and at the guidance office at each school.



*Welcome to New Members Mike Comfort and Emma Johnson
New Lifetime Members: Marcelyn Scherer, Stephen Gerbec,
Kathy Granger Kowalski and Michael Carlson.*

Memberships, Memorials and Donations to the Sheldon

Historical Society may be sent to :

PO Box 122, Strykersville, NY 14145



Sheldon Historical Society
Schoolhouse Museum
3859 Main Street, PO Box 122
Strykersville, NY 14145

In This Issue:

Persons Pioneer Cemetery	1
Pioneer Cemetery List	6
Old Brewery Cave Cellar	7
Brewery Cellar, Part 2	8
Potter Story	12
America's 250th	14
Memorial Day Programs	15
Historian & Townwide Sale	18

Newsletter printed by:
ARC Hilltop Printshop
Mount Morris, NY 14510
(585)658-3311

Research assistance is available throughout the year.

For inquiries please contact Jeanne Mest, Town Historian, email: townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com, 716-474-3156 or mail: 470 Rt. 20A, Strykersville, NY 14145.

Newsletter compiled and edited by Jeanne Mest, with the assistance of creator/consultant Mary Ann Metzger, Scott Barvian and many volunteers. Submissions welcome; please send articles or questions to Historian. Newsletters can be emailed. Large print versions are available. For previous newsletters, see website or contact Historian.

Sheldon Historical Society Officers:

President - Laury Lakas
Vice President - Carol Felski
Secretary - Kate Meyer
Treasurer - Michelle Fontaine
Archival Curator - Jeanne Mest

Board Members:

P.J. Almeter, Chairman;
Janet Kirsch, Barbara Logel,
Elaine Almeter, Judie Coffey, Steve Lakas

Museum Curator - Barbara Logel
Classroom Curator & Town of Orangeville Historian - Laury Lakas
laurylakas@gmail.com
Town of Sheldon Historian and Newsletter Editor - Jeanne Mest
townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com

Sheldon Historical Society Membership

Being a member of the Sheldon Historical Society means being part of preserving history. Dues and donations support the maintenance of our museum and historical artifacts. As a member you have voting privileges, and newsletters are sent to you at no cost. The membership year is from July 1 through the following June 30. Current membership status is shown on your mailing label. Please remember to renew yearly, and let us know of any address changes. If you are currently a member, thank you for your support!

2024-2025 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Please send a check payable to the Sheldon Historical Society to
PO Box 122, Strykersville, NY 14145

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

____ New Member ____ Membership Renewal

____ \$12 Annual Membership July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

____ \$75 Lifetime Membership

____ Would like to make a Donation In Memory/Honor of _____

____ Complimentary - Current Members Only 80+