



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 our first issue for 2025. Tuesdays at the Schoolhouse begin on June 10. Our next meeting will be May 15 at 7:00 pm at the Schoolhouse Museum. But our June meeting will be June 19 at the Sheldon Town Hall, with Joyce Thompson Hovey, who will bring us a historical presentation. We will have a brief meeting at 6:30, followed by the program, "Lincoln's Lost 15 Hours" which takes place in Genesee/Wyoming.

## FROM SHELDON, NEW YORK TO BELLE CHESTER, MINNESOTA:

### LUXEMBOURG IMMIGRANTS MOVED WEST

BY BRIAN A. MAJERUS, SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

In the early 1850s, families of Luxembourg immigrants journeyed westward to the Minnesota Territory. They left the Sheldon, New York area for affordable farmland and new beginnings. These families settled in Belvidere Township, Goodhue County, and Chester Township, Wabasha County, in southeastern Minnesota along the Mississippi River. This area was originally part of the Sioux Half-Breed Indian Reservation.

Some of these families' names are still recognized in the community today: Reding, Tuck, Clemens, Schroeder, Wagner, Majerus, Befort, Bartholome, Strauss, Reiland, Weber, Nardinger and Arendt.

(Continued on next page)



Stephen and Barbara Weimar Majerus

In 1859, the first Catholic Masses were celebrated in the homes of local families, marking the beginning of St. Mary Parish and the community of Belle Chester.

The first church was built in 1865 on land acquired from Thomas Frenier, a “Sioux Half-Breed”. The first recorded baptism was that of Anna Catherine Befort, the daughter of William Befort and Anna Deville.

William was my great-grandfather, born in Grevenmacher, Luxembourg, on August 29, 1827, while Anna was born in Hachy, Luxembourg (Belgium), on April 10, 1839. They were married at St. Cecilia’s in Sheldon on February 5, 1861.

A new stone and brick church was constructed in 1877, but tragically, it was destroyed by a fire in 1926. Subsequently, a new church was built and dedicated on July 17, 1927. On March 29, 1942, a fire struck again, heavily damaging the church; however, it was rededicated in November of that same year, with Bishop Peter Bartholome, a Belle Chester native, in attendance. Interestingly, the bishop’s father, Nicholas, was born in Petit-Nobressart, Diekirch, Luxembourg.

In 1881, the parish opened a grade school named St. Donatus. Four sisters from the Sisters of Notre Dame were appointed to oversee the school and its students. In 1902, the original wood structure, which was later renamed St. Mary’s School, was replaced with a two-story brick building. At the time of the parish’s 100th anniversary, 90 students were enrolled, making it one of the largest schools in the two-county area.

The Reding and Majerus families were among the earliest families in the church and community. Heinrich Reding (1796 - 1874) was born in Niedervicten, Luxembourg, and arrived in Sheldon in 1835.



St. Donatus Grade School; Later St. Mary’s School



Stone & brick church built in 1877; destroyed by fire in 1926

He was later joined by his brother Pierre (1789 - 1849) and Pierre's daughter and son-in-law, Catherina and Nicholas Majerus. They settled in Sheldon in 1843 and began their family there.

Around 1865, Nicholas, Catherine, and their family moved to Minnesota, purchasing 160 acres in Belvidere Township. Several of the Reding farms were located nearby. Today, the original farm is owned by their great-great-great-granddaughter, Kathy, and her husband, Henry Thomforde.

Approximately a mile to the west, their son Stephen and his wife Barbara Weimar purchased a 160-acre farm and started their own family. Stephan constructed a Low Countries/European-style windmill to grind wheat for local farmers.

(Continued on next page)



St. Mary's Church, Bellechester, Minnesota

Their eldest son, John Bernard (1872-1944), married Agnes Befort, daughter of William and Anna Befort, former Sheldon residents.

The first commercial venture in Belle Chester was established in 1871 by Nicholas Heber (1837 – 1884) and his wife, Anna Majerus. They operated a general store and saloon. Nicholas was born in Mamer, Capellen, Luxembourg, while Anna (1847 – 1928) was born in Bigonville, Redange, Diekirch, Luxembourg.

It is likely they were acquainted with the Luxembourg families from Sheldon.

Another early business owner was Anton Casper Sr., born April 6, 1841, in Strasbourg, Bas-Rhin, France. He immigrated to Buffalo, NY, and married Eva Reding, the daughter of Heinrich and Mary Weber Reding, in Sheldon in 1866. They opened a general store in Belle Chester in 1877.

In 1910 clay was discovered near Bellechester. Railroad tracks were laid down and the clay was shipped to Red Wing, Minnesota. This was the start of a growth spurt and several new businesses were established near the railroad tracks. The clay run deposit ran out about 1921.

The surrounding farmland was purchased by J. B Majerus. J.B. was both a farmer and an inventor. During the winter of 1907, he built a car in the parlor of their home located at the farm that originally belonged to Nicholas and Catherine. In 1919, he designed, patented, and manufactured the J.B. Majerus Portable Grain Elevator in Bellechester, MN, which he produced until 1936. He partnered with his eldest son, Richard, in the Bellechester Garage. After World War II, J.B.'s youngest son, Quentin (1921 – 2006), partnered with Richard in the business.

After the construction of the railroad tracks, new businesses were opened in Bellechester by families with former ties to Sheldon. Conrad (coal sheds), Strauss (dry goods and appliances), Strauss, Befort and Musty (garage and gas station), Siebe and Befort (hardware and implements), Majerus (blacksmith shop) and later Befort (blacksmith) and Poncelet (hardware) were Main Street businesses.



**J.B. Majerus Portable Grain Elevator, which he invented and patented in 1919**

A number of men and women from St. Mary Parish families became priests and nuns. Sons and daughters from the Strauss, Reding, Bartholome, Weinman, Gregoire, Weber, Majerus, Befort, Arendt, Huneke, and Reiland. Most of these religious had families that first settled in Sheldon. It is interesting to note that St. Mary Parish had ties to three bishops. Bishop Stariha, Diocese of Lead, South Dakota pastored St. Mary Parish in the early years. Bishop Joseph Busch, Diocese of Lead/Rapid City, South Dakota and St. Cloud, Minnesota was related to the Majerus family. Bishop Peter Bartholome, Diocese of St. Cloud, Minnesota was born and raised in Bellechester.

Over the past 175 years, the descendants of the Luxembourg immigrants from Sheldon have spread across the United States, opening farmland, establishing new communities, building churches, and becoming patriotic citizens.

\* \* \*

*Thank you, Brian, for sharing the history of your family.*

*I find it fascinating how these immigrants who first came to Sheldon and later moved west experienced both remarkable similarities and stark differences in how they settled and built their communities. They established towns and churches much like they had in Sheldon, yet the environments they encountered were vastly different.*

*Take, for example, the story of Thomas Frenier, the son of a woman descended from the Dakota people and a French fur trader, and his experiences during the Dakota War of 1862. The challenges faced by Native Americans created a dramatically different landscape for settlers arriving in Minnesota. These pioneers, who had originally emigrated from Luxembourg in the 1830s, arrived in the West at a time of great turmoil, unlike the more settled conditions they had found in Sheldon.*

*Minnesota, the ancestral homeland of the Dakota people, became a U.S. territory in 1849 and a state in 1858. By the time these immigrant families left Sheldon, they had already journeyed 3,000 to 4,000 miles from Luxembourg. From there, they traveled another 900 miles to Bellechester. Had they gone just 100 miles farther, they would have found themselves in the midst of a devastating conflict that claimed the lives of hundreds of settlers and Dakota alike.*

*Jeanne Mest*

#### **Sheldon Memories from letters sent by Joanne Mazur:**

*Do you remember Anna Souviner Botalo? She was a cousin to us. I knew she taught school but I never knew where the school was. She was telling us once that she had to go check at the schoolhouse when there had been a snow storm, to make sure none of the kids had tried to get there. Then there was a great, great Aunt, Louise Fontaine. She lived at the corner of Rt. 77 and Centerline Rd. I remember staying with her when she was sick. Over the years, the family moved around. Grandpa Fred had a brother, Matthew. He lived in Sheldon for a while, then got married to a Smith girl and moved to Nebraska and then Minnesota. He built the Fugle Mill, near Stewardsville. He patterned it after a mill that his family used to run in Germany. My husband and I took a trip to visit this one in Minnesota. It was all set to work if called for but it was a museum at the time. There was another Fugle, that went to Minnesota, then moved to Dakota. There he lived in a sod hut for a while. Francis, a sister of Grandpa Fred Fugle, left and went to Minnesota, also. She married a Peter Joseph McQuaid from Ireland. They had one son, Joseph, who became a priest. He was born in Rochester, Minnesota on 14 April 1861 and was a monsignor when he passed away in Jonesboro, Arkansas, on 24 July 1935.*

**[We were sorry to hear of the passing of Joanne Mazur, a Fred Fugle descendant and long-time member of the Sheldon Historical Society. Does any of this sound familiar? Let us know]**

**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. Now is the time to sign up for membership or to renew. The membership year runs July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. If you sign up or renew now or come see us at the Townwide Yard Sale, we will have a gift for you.

It helps a lot with expenses, especially with the newsletters and scholarships. Whenever you donate in honor or memory of someone, we will send a note to let the family know. This month we started having our print shop mail the newsletters directly, so I can't include a notice if your membership is behind.

Welcome to our New Members; we are so glad you joined us and we appreciate your support.

Lifetime: Brian Majerus of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Brian is a descendant of the Reding Family. His Majerus ancestors lived in Sheldon and moved west to Minnesota in 1865. Thank you, Brian, for sharing your story, "From Sheldon, New York, to Bellechester, Minnesota" (p. 1)

Wayne George changed his membership from Annual to Lifetime. Wayne has been a member of the Sheldon Historical Society for many years and is always willing to help with projects, especially with the cleanup and care of our pioneer cemeteries. Thank you, Wayne.

Annual: Janis Hempel of Attica, a retired English teacher who has been active for many years with the Attica Historical Society and the Federation of Historical Societies. We are delighted to have you!

Thomas Becker of Illinois. Tom's membership was a gift from his brother, Father Vince. What a nice idea to keep in mind, when you are looking for a gift, why not a membership in the Sheldon Historical Society, so they can receive our newsletters and learn the history of our town.

Also, I want to thank Taina Armstrong Hoffman for her research and interesting story of Israel and Margaret Reed.

Our sympathy goes out to the family of Richard Kibler, a new member who passed away recently.

**Memorial Donations Received**

*Thank you for your Generous Donations to the Sheldon Historical Society:*

*In Memory of Peter Reding, by Brian Majerus of Sioux Falls, SD.*

*In Memory of 3rd Gr. Grandfather Stephen Simon, by Mary Finestein*

Memberships, Memorials & Donations to the Sheldon Historical Society may be sent to:  
PO Box 122, Strykersville, NY 14145



## PERSONS PIONEER CEMETERY

By Jeanne Mest

Last October the historic roadside marker we received from the William Pomeroy Foundation was installed, but the snow came so quickly, we never got a photo of it. So here it is. Who else but the intrepid P.J. Almeter would climb up the hill again this spring with his chainsaw and his cell phone? P.J. and other volunteers cleaned up the brush last fall to get ready for the sign, and thanks to the town and our highway specialist, Lucas Metz, we now have the sign. Getting these historic markers requires the help of many. First the historian spends hours researching and writing the applications, hoping for a reply saying they like it. But often more evidence is needed,



so after more research, hopefully they approve us to receive the sign. Then we have to get a place ready to put it and have it installed. For the Persons Pioneer and the Strykersville Pioneer Cemeteries, it meant some major work cleaning up the cemeteries so they would look nice. So, it takes a village, as so many worthwhile projects do, and I want to thank everyone who has helped to make it possible to put up these historic signs telling about our town's history and why we are so proud of it.

Wouldn't Uriah Persons be surprised to see how his service in the Revolutionary War has been honored, along with the many veterans of the War of 1812 who are buried in this little hill; John Persons, Henry Persons, Curtis Brace, Linus Brace, Edward Brace, Daniel Warren along with his son Thomas Warren and Dr. Ziba Hamilton.

This year I submitted an application for Frink's Corners, where there are has three Revolutionary War veterans! They are John Browning Frink, Sr., William Mann, Sr. and James Case, Sr. Also, there are two soldiers at Frink's from the War of 1812: Lemuel Chipman, Jr. and James Case, Jr., both of whom were captives of the British. The Pomeroy Foundation is known for being totally accurate and authentic, so they need to be absolutely certain the facts are correct, and that requires Primary Sources, such as documents, deeds, wills, books and newspaper articles from the time of the original event. The signs are to commemorate historic events, people, and buildings where history happened, and it has to be at least 100 years ago. So if you think of a place that deserves recognition, please let me know and we will look into it.

Congratulations to **Mike and Elaine Almeter**, who just celebrated their **60th Wedding Anniversary!** They were married April 24, 1965, at St. Mary's Church in Strykersville and have two daughters and 11 grand and great grand children. They are lifetime members of the Sheldon Historical Society as well as serving the community in many different ways. Mike was our president for several years, while Elaine used her talent in designing our historical displays, and they continue to assist at our Town Wide Sale and whatever we need help with.

**Thank you and Best Wishes!**



**Mike and Elaine Almeter**

## WYOMING COUNTY FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES SPRING WORKSHOP

The 2025 Spring Workshop was hosted by the Java Historical Society at Holy Family Church Hall in North Java, on March 29. This year was a morning event, from 8:30 to 11:30 with a Continental Breakfast instead of a luncheon.

Each speaker had a half hour plus question time. There were two speakers from the Holland Land Office Museum in Batavia, Ryan Duffy, Director, and Tyler Angora, museum curator. Each explained their specialties. Ryan gave us the history of the **Holland Land Company** and answered many questions to help us understand it's importance. After hearing their talk, one of our guests asked if we could ever take a field trip in to visit the museum in person. Perhaps we could carpool. Any interest? Let us know.

The Museum has many different exhibits, and one is about Joseph Ellicott and Robert Morris. Joseph Ellicott was the Surveyor and Resident Agent of the Holland Land Company, and he and his family played a pivotal role in the development of Western New York. Robert was the man who owned WNY and sold it to the Holland Land Company in 1797. Morris was the richest man in the United States at the time and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Paul Pilc spoke about the **National Grange**, a group behind the scenes that is responsible for all kinds of legislation to help farmers. Oliver Kelly was commissioned by President Andrew Jackson to help farmers across the country and he came up with the idea of the Grange. In 1867, the grange became the first nationwide farm organization to give full voice and vote to women, 50 years before women got the right to vote in the United States. In 1871, Chicago entrepreneur Montgomery Ward began a mail order business as a contractor to the national Grange, selling exclusively to Grange members. The Grange secured passage of legislation to protect the political and economic rights of farmers & consumers and they were also responsible for Rural Free Delivery mail service and the Pure Food and Drug Act. Many Communities had granges years ago and a few, like Curriers Grange, have been active for over 113 years.

**Special thanks to Penny N-Logel and the Java Historical Society for hosting the workshop!**

### Coming up soon:

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Monday, May 26, 2025</b>    | <b>Memorial Day Services at cemeteries in the Town of Sheldon</b>   |
| <b>Thursday, June 19</b>       | <b>Join us at the Sheldon Town Hall for a special presentation, "Lincoln's Lost 15 Hours" by Joyce Thompson Hovey, following a brief meeting at 6:30.</b>   |
| <b>June 7 to 8</b>             | <b>Annual Strykersville Town-Wide Yard Sale. Come see us at the Schoolhouse Museum, we will be open all day Saturday and Sunday</b>   |
| <b>Tuesday, June 10, 1-4pm</b> | <b>Summer Hours Begin at the Schoolhouse on Tuesday afternoons. For Research Assistance, please email: <a href="mailto:townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com">townofsheldonhistorian@gmail.com</a> or call (716)474-3156</b> |
| <b>June 14-15</b>              | <b>Varysburg Sales Days</b>   |
| <b>Saturday, July 12</b>       | <b>Strykersville Fireman's Parade</b>   |

# COMING UP SOON

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 15 at the Schoolhouse Museum



## Memorial Day, Monday, May 26, 2025

The Six Star American Legion will present their program at various cemeteries



The Sheldon Historical Society will resume our summer hours on Tuesday afternoons from 1:00 to 4:00 pm at the Schoolhouse Museum, beginning on Tuesday, June 10.

Then on Thursday, June 19, Joyce Thompson Hovey will be bringing us a historical presentation at the Sheldon Town Hall. We will hold a brief meeting at 6:30, followed by the program. Everyone is welcome. More details will follow on Facebook.

Be sure and keep an eye on our website, <https://www.sheldonhistoricalsociety.com>, as we continue to add new information there.

## 34th Annual Townwide **YARD SALE**

# STRYKERSVILLE, NY

*Sponsored by the* SHELDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# JUNE 7 & 8 2025

**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

Historian available for Information  
Sheldon & Orangeville History Display

*Theme Basket Raffle*

**Flower & Plant Sales**

**Boy Scouts: HOTDOG Stand**

Limited Flea spaces available

*\*Proceeds to benefit Scholarship Fund & Pioneer Cemetery Restoration\**

## Antiques..Bargains..Prime Junque

## Good Food...Great Fun

I will participate in the Townwide yard sale. I am enclosing \$15.00 per set-up. Please make check payable to the Sheldon Historical Society. Mail to Barb Logel, POBox 150, Strykersville, NY 14145. Non-Resident Lawn spaces @ \$30.00 Call Barb@ 716-863-1474 or Judy @ 585-457-3444 to reserve a spot. **Commercial vendor spaces available. Call for prices.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Location of sale \_\_\_\_\_  
Help keep the town clean. Have a trash bin at your location.

Come see us at the  
Townwide Yard Sale!  
The Sheldon Schoolhouse  
Museum will be open all  
day on each day. Come in  
for a tour! It's a great time  
to sign up for membership  
or pay your annual dues,  
and get a prize. This is our  
main fund raiser for the  
year, and the money goes  
to maintain our museum  
and to our Scholarship  
Fund, which gives a \$500  
Scholarship every year to a  
senior at each school;  
Pioneer, Holland & Attica.

## Unearthing Margaret's Story

By Taina Armstrong Hoffman

They say history is written by the victors-but family history? That's researched and written by those who show up with a shovel, and a bit of intuition.

Margaret Reed left behind no journals, no portraits, no heirlooms delicately passed down. Her voice doesn't echo in letters or diaries. Instead, she lingers in the silence between census years, church records, the fragile script of her husband's probate file, and in the slowly deteriorating stone we found beneath a mat of decaying leaves in a quiet local cemetery, slowly being lost to time. Researching women in the 18th and early 19th centuries is not for the faint of heart. Prior to 1850, the U.S. census acknowledged women mostly in numbers: "One female over the age of 45." That's how Margaret appears-if she appears at all. Her identity, like so many frontier wives, is buried in the shadows of the men she supported.

Years ago, I reached out to a cousin who shared my curiosity. We both descend from Margaret. After pouring through photos, stories, pedigree charts, and heirlooms from more recent generations, we decided it was time for a "field trip." On a bitter cold day in February of 2016, we bundled up and drove to Humphrey Cemetery in Holland where Margaret's husband was laid to rest. From there, we navigated the route we thought Margaret and her children would have taken from Israel's final resting place to the area of their home. We didn't know their exact address, but with maps, and old family lore in hand, we drove up Warner Hill Rd, speculating where Israel first cleared the forest and settled in 1811. Up and over Vermont Hill we climbed, from one valley down into the next. As we drove, we imagined our ancestors traveling those same roads, some 200 years ago.



Israel Reed's marker  
Humphrey Cemetery in  
Holland

Upon arriving at the **Strykersville Pioneer Cemetery**, we stood before the carefully stacked stone wall and old wrought-iron gate, full of hope and reverence. My cousin, who had been there before, paced out her steps like a seasoned guide- carefully counting paces and using trees and shrubs as her map. She had the route memorized like a recipe passed down through generations.

The grass was thick, taking over grave stones like time itself. It took a few minutes of searching before we found what we were looking for-or rather-what remained of it. Margaret's headstone was flush to the ground, barely visible beneath the creeping sod and last autumn's leaves, now half compost and half memory. We knelt to the ground and began peeling back the layers. Only a few letters of Margaret's name were visible. My cell phone contained photos that helped us confirm we had the right stone. There were so many markers down, hidden beneath the debris.

It wasn't just rotting leaves and muddy sod we were brushing away—it was erasure. The quiet kind that happens when the world forgets. Bit by bit, the carved letters emerged: **MARGARET**, faint but still defiant against time. No ornate carving, no poetic epitaph visible. Just her name, wife of Israel Reed, and the dates that bookended her life carved into a cold, dark stone that lie sunken and level with the earth. She appeared to be alone~no other family member markers near her. Her tablet would have been easy to miss. I didn't know then that the stone was broken in two~only half present, like the pieces of her story I was still trying to unearth. Beneath our hands, we could feel more than the cold stone; we could feel the gravity of the lives rooted here, of a woman who crossed wilderness and war to lie beneath this rural patch of soil. We left the cemetery with more questions than answers, but also with a feeling—an unshakable sense that Margaret was waiting. That her story, like her stone, hadn't disappeared. It had only been covered up. And we were just beginning to uncover it.

## Born of Stone and Fire

Long before her name was carved into stone, Margaret—*Margaretha*, as she was first known—was written in water. She entered the world on May 16, 1764, in the Mohawk Valley of New York, a region both fertile and fiercely contested. Margaretha was the fourth child and third daughter born into a large Palatine family totaling eleven children. Six days later, her family carried her to the Reformed Church of Stone Arabia, where she was baptized into the faith of her ancestors. The minister then marked her name into the book of life: **Margaretha Zimmerman, daughter of Georg Zimmerman and Anna Elisabeth.** That church still stands—weathered stone against the sky—its walls bearing silent witness to generations of settlers who arrived from the Palatine and the Rhineland. They were German-speaking Protestants, refugees of war and hardship, who carved out farms, trading posts, and communities along the Mohawk River. These were people of resilience—people who planted crops while keeping rifles by the door.

## The Stone House

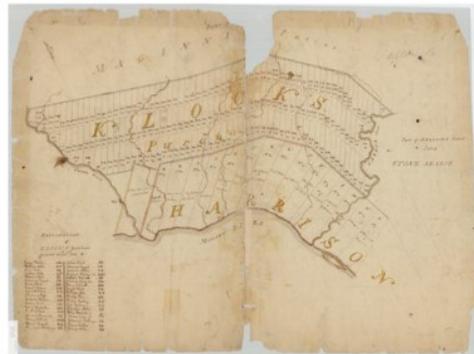
Before Margaret could walk, she likely toddled across a floor of rough-hewn boards inside a house unlike most others—a house built to withstand war.

**Fort Klock**, built around 1750 by her grandfather, **Johan Georg Klock and his wife, Anna Margaretha Fox**, was more than just a homestead. It was a **fortified limestone structure**, perched near the banks of the Mohawk River in what is now St. Johnsville, New York. In a valley on the edge of wilderness, it stood like a bulwark of civilization—thick-walled and unshakable, with defense in its very bones.

The walls of Fort Klock were **two feet thick**, made of native limestone pulled from the surrounding land. Each stone was laid by hand—fitted not just for insulation or weatherproofing, but for protection. During times of peace, it was a family home. During times of war, it became a refuge for neighbors, livestock, and supplies. There were **gun ports** carved into the walls—small slits that looked out over the surrounding fields, just wide enough for a musket barrel. From inside, settlers could fire out while staying safely behind stone. The windows were few and small, more practical than decorative, meant to keep out lead and flame rather than let in light.

One of the home's most distinctive features was a **wash basin carved directly into the limestone**, smooth and cool to the touch. It wasn't ornamental. It was a feature of necessity—a place to draw water, wash wounds, or prepare food when it wasn't safe to venture outside. The interior would have been sparse but solid—wooden beams dark with smoke, iron hinges forged by local blacksmiths, and floorboards worn down by boots and bare feet.

To Margaret, this may have seemed normal. But Fort Klock was, in many ways, a symbol: of determination, of fear, and of survival. It stood then—and still stands today—as one of the last remaining fortified homesteads of the colonial frontier. Her childhood memories—if any survived in her descendants' bones—would have included the sounds of doors and shutters slammed closed against rumor of raids, the scent of gunpowder and cured meat, the hush of prayers whispered in a stronghold built of stone.



**1754 Map of Klock's Purchase & the Harrison Tract. Map #865A NYS Archives. The Klocks & Zimmermans owned thousands of acres in this area situated north of the Mohawk River.**

### Founding Family of St. Johnsville, NY

Margaret's paternal grandfather, **Johann Jacob Zimmerman**, also known as Jacob Timmerman, is credited with being the first settler in 1725 and founder of the village that would later become St. Johnsville, NY. He and his wife, Anna Margaretha, had several children including George Johan Jurrian Zimmerman who married Anna Elisabeth Klock, uniting two leading Palatine families of the Mohawk Valley.

Both of her grandmothers were named Anna Margaretha. To some, it might seem coincidence. But in the Zimmerman and Klock families, names were more than labels—they were legacy. Margaret bore neither of their full names—but she inherited their strength.

Margaret's surname shifted with time—*Zimmerman* in baptismal records, *Timmerman* in later documents. Spelling was fluid and changed as languages collided. Clerks wrote what they heard.

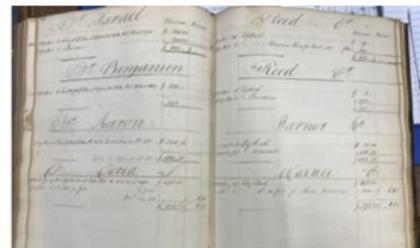
### Reed-Zimmerman Unions in the Valley

On **February 25th, 1794**, in the hamlet of **German Flatts**, nestled in **Herkimer County**, **Margaretha Zimmerman**, age 29, took the hand of **Israel Reed, age 25** and became his wife. Israel and Margaret welcomed five children into their ever changing world. Benjamin, their firstborn, arrived on July 10, 1795. Next came their only daughter, Eliza, on November 5, 1797. Warren was the middle child, born March 27, 1799, followed by Charles two years later on April 5, 1801. And then there was Reckord—a name that stands out, curious and bold, born on March 3, 1803. All five children, nearly perfectly timed two years apart, were born in Herkimer County.

Anna, Margaret's younger sister, married Israel's younger brother, Abner, on February 2, 1794, three week's prior to the older siblings union. Anna and Abner had nine children.

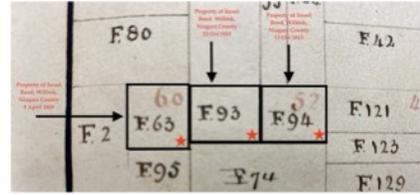
### Westward Bound

As the 18th century gave way to the 19th, the Mohawk Valley began to feel crowded—not in people, but in possibility. The fertile lands had long been spoken for, parceled out to other family members. For young families like the Reeds, the horizon to the west shimmered with promise. By the early 1800s, the state of New York was swelling outward, its forests giving way to farms. The **Holland Land Company**, a powerful Dutch investment group, acquired vast tracts of wilderness in what would become Western New York. In **Range 5, Township 9**, nestled in what is now **Wales, Erie County**, Israel Reed secured **231½ acres** from the Holland Land Company—a vast and rugged parcel waiting to be tamed. The promise was great: fresh soil untouched by plow or axe, timbered forests, rich glacial earth—perfect for farming—and freedom from the past. It was a chance to build something lasting—a homestead to pass down, and a community to help shape. It was not an easy life, but it was a chosen one. On April 3, 1809, Israel Reed took pen to paper and committed to a new beginning. In the sparse handwriting of a **land agent's ledger**, he became one of the original purchasers in the newly surveyed lands of Willink, Niagara County, New York.



Ledger Book: Range 5, Town 9, Folio 63  
Holland Land Office Museum, Batavia,

The first agreement was for a parcel of 81 ½ acres in Lot 60, priced at \$2.25 an acre, totaling \$183.38. Israel paid \$9 down, a modest but determined first step toward claiming his piece of the American frontier. In 1811, about eight years after the birth of their youngest child, **Israel and Margaret Reed packed up their lives** and headed westward. Whether they traveled by ox cart, sled, or on foot, they would have followed rough roads and Native trails through dense woods and across rivers swollen in spring. Four years after the first purchase agreement, they doubled down on their commitment. Israel entered additional agreements on October 13, 1813—this time for two more 75 acre parcels in Lot 52, at a higher price: \$3.25 an acre. The land was gaining value, a sign of the area’s growing promise. He paid \$12 on each tract that day, adding 150 acres to the family’s holdings.

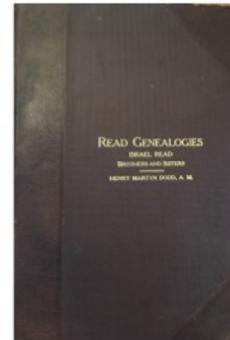


Ledger Book: R-5, T-9, Hand-drawn map  
Holland Land Office Museum, Batavia, NY

### Battle of Buffalo

Henry Martyn Dodd, author of the *Read Genealogies*, published in 1912, offers a great summation of the tragedy that unfolded next, about eleven weeks after Israel added acreage to their farm. From the Buffalo Express, of Feb. 7th, 1897, and the same paper for Mar 22nd, 1908, and the accounts given by his descendants, Dodd was able to give a detailed account of the circumstances of Israel Reed’s death:

“Near the close of the war of 1812, on the 29th of Dec. 1813, the British invaded the Niagara frontier, with an army of about 1,000 men mostly regular soldiers. They were followed by about 100 lawless Indians, who, it was known, would kill every American that fell into their hands. Hence our men were more afraid of the Indians than the British. To meet this invasion the local militia were called out. Benjamin Reed, being over 16, was drafted, or “ordered out,” with his regiment. He was not well, and so his father, Israel, volunteered to go in his stead, although he, himself, had what was then called “Tyler’s Gripe,” a disease that produced a trouble in the side that prevented one from running fast. He also had asthma...But he shouldered his gun and set out for the defense of his country. It was bitter cold weather, and the snow lay deep on the fields. **As he left home his wife gave him a pair of woolen mittens she had knit for him.**”



“His regiment was stationed at Black Rock, just below Buffalo. It was ordered out to meet the enemy, and a battle was expected. Israel Reed was just then on detached guard duty and might have kept out of danger staying where he was, but instead he chose to go with his neighbors to fight, and he got another to take his place on guard. Among the neighbors was Josiah Emery, a near neighbor and close friend (in after years, a colonel of militia). They soon met the enemy, and the battle began. It is a matter of history that through the mismanagement of our officers and the fact that our men saw themselves outnumbered and knew that the Indians were not far behind, that our lines gradually gave way, and our men were on the run. Among the last to run were Col. Emery and Israel Reed. They had to run. For a time Emery accommodated his pace to Israel’s gait. At last Israel gave out entirely and said he could run no farther. Then Emery spoke about staying with him and fighting it out there, but Israel would not let him. **He bade him go on and save himself, and pulled off one of the mittens and gave it to Col. Emery to hand his wife,** when he got back to Willink. They also left Israel an extra musket. The Indians were then so close upon them that, as Col. Emery used to say, he could hear them panting. He looked back once more and saw Reed standing against a tree and waving them to go on. That was the last seen of him alive.”

“Two or three days later they found his body where they had left him alive, on the frozen ground, entirely stripped of clothing, scalped, twice thrust through with a bayonet, and arms badly hacked. There were indications that two or three other bodies had been taken away, and it is almost certain that he killed two or three and perhaps more of his foes, and then clubbed them with his guns, one of which was found broken and cut with tomahawks.”

“The precise place where this took place was almost exactly where the famous “Pan American Exhibition,” at Buffalo was held. As soon as the news reached Willink, and the family, Benjamin, the oldest son, aged 18, went after his father’s body and brought it home with the ox-team on an ox sled, covered with a blanket. They buried it in the Humphrey Cemetery nearby, where he now sleeps, with a godly roster of patriot dead, waiting the Resurrection morn. At the funeral, the boy, Charles, then 12 years old, not having, just then, shoes to wear, his feet were wrapped in other garments.”

“A quaint old tombstone was erected, in what was then regarded as unusually fine style.”

“A weeping willow droops mournfully from the upper part of the weather-beaten stone, with the solemn urn beneath, and this inscription:”

IN MEMORY OF  
MR. ISRAEL REED,  
Who was slain by the savages in the  
battle fought at Buffalo,  
Dec. 30th, 1813  
Aged 45 years.  
O from thy kindred thou wast torn,  
And to the grave untimely borne:  
Oft as remembrance brings us near,  
Affection will drop a tear.



Israel Reed’s *original gravestone*, weighing about 300 pounds, is in storage at the **Buffalo History Museum**. It was last viewable by the public over a decade ago, when it was put on display for the 200th anniversary of the Burning of Buffalo.

*the name of a Baptist congregation*  
Jany the 9th 1814 this Day was a Day of alarm  
and grate fear of the British and indians and no  
meeting was attend -  
The church met found the

2nd Baptist Society Sheldon (**Sheldon Baptist Church**): an entry in the record book reads, “Jany [January] the 9th 1814 this Day was a Day of alarm and grate fear of the British and Indians and no meeting was attend~” **Sheldon Historical Society**

Israel Reed died without a will, and his wife **Margaret was appointed administratrix** along with Jared Scott, administrator. Margaret quickly supplied an inventory of Israel's estate. It included:

- Two articles of land, \$12.00 paid on each — \$24.00
- One other article of land, \$9.00 paid on it — \$9.00
- Fifteen acres of improved land — \$85.00
- Two small cows at \$15.00 each — \$30.00
- Three two-year-old cattle at \$10.00 each — \$30.00
- Three one-year-old cattle at \$4.33 each — \$13.00
- One black mare — \$20.00
- One red mare — \$35.00
- One sow and [six] pigs — \$7.00
- An old [plow or wagon] — \$2.00
- Household furniture that is old and worn and is of but little value — \$10.00
- A potash kettle — \$10.00
- A piece of chain, three axes [or oxen], and some other small articles — \$3.00

**Total — \$278.00**

The potash kettle was a cornerstone of early frontier industry—kind of like a mini-factory in someone's backyard. Its a large iron cauldron, often suspended over an outdoor fire. They typically held up to 100 gallons, and was a heavy, durable piece of equipment passed down through generations. Settlers used it to make potash. First they burned hardwood trees—especially maple, hickory, or oak. Then the ashes were collected and leached with water in a barrel with a hole at the bottom, to make lye. The lye was then boiled down in the kettle, slowly evaporating the water. What remained was crude potash—a salty, chalky white to light gray substance, which was one of the first cash crops for settlers. It was used in soap making, glass production, gunpowder, and fertilizer.

In the same year that Margaret lost her husband, her daughter Eliza began a new chapter. On October 9, 1814, **Eliza married Garner Mason** in the town of Wales. Garner purchased a parcel of land from the Holland Land Company on December 14, 1812, in Lot 42—just east of the Reed homestead, closer to what would later become Strykersville. Eliza and Garner remained nearby and went on to have eleven children, expanding the Reed family's presence in the region. Eliza (spelled Elisa) was the third female added by letter to join the Strykersville Baptist Church on September 26, 1827. Her husband, Garner, later joined the church in 1836.

**Notice.**  
THE creditors of *Israel Reed*, late of the town of Willink, deceased, are requested to meet at the house of Margaret Reed, on the 21st day of March inst. and present their several claims, and make arrangements as to receiving their pay.  
JARED SCOTT,  
admin'r,  
MARGARET REED,  
admin'x.  
Feb. 28th, 1814. 4w20

*Administration Bond on  
the Estate of Israel Reed  
late of Willink deceased  
1814*



A visual inventory of Israel's estate  
AI generated photo.

Sept 26 1814. 3w50  
**60 dol. reward.**  
DESERTED from my company of militia, belonging to the 4th Regt. N. Y. Militia, at B. Falls, under the command of Lt. Col. Warren, the following men, for the apprehension and delivery of them, at this place, or at any military post on this frontier, the above reward, (or 10 dols. for each), will be paid.  
Gilbert Holmes, sergt. Philo Richardson, drummer, Benjamin Reed, Jared Scott, Hiram Holt, Joseph Mory.  
By order of Lt. Col. Warren.  
LYMAN BLACKMAR, Capt.  
Sept 26. 1814. 3w50

Benjamin Reed & Jared Scott  
deserted from the militia.  
10 dollar reward offered for each.  
Buffalo Patriot & Commercial  
Advertiser, Buffalo, NY Oct. 4, 1814.

By 1820, six years after the death of her husband, Margaret remained in their home and was listed as head of household in the federal census. She never remarried. Living with her, were three males between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five—that likely her sons Charles and Reckord, helping to manage the family's land, which had been secured years earlier. Margaret's name never appeared in the HLC ledger book or on a property deed. However, Margaret's role as matriarch was firmly established, and she maintained her family's presence on the frontier with quiet resilience.

On February 18, 1819, Margaret's son **Benjamin married Lucy Maria Stryker**, daughter of Garret & Saloma Stryker, tying the family even more closely to the community east of their homestead. Together, they had at least twelve children—one of the many large families descending from the Reeds.

Benjamin initially stayed close to home, purchasing land in Lots 34 and 26 of Township 9, Range 5, and making an additional payment in 1819 on Lot 60, which was part of the original Reed parcel. But like many in his generation, he was drawn westward by new opportunities. In 1829, he sold his holdings in Lots 34 and 26 and allowed Lot 60 to revert back to the Holland Land Company. Around 1830, Benjamin and his growing family left New York, heading first to Detroit. From there, they continued west to Bourbon, Indiana, and eventually settled in Kansas. In his later years, Benjamin moved in with his son William, spending his final days in Kansas.

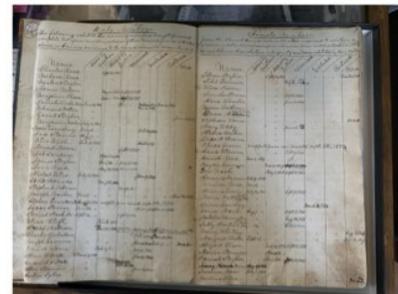
Margaret's son **Warren married Betsey Stephens** around 1820, and the couple settled in Wales, where they would remain for nearly two decades. There, they welcomed seven of their eight children, building a life close to Warren's childhood home.

But the family was struck by profound tragedy—five of their children died within a short time of one another, victims of scarlet fever. The loss was devastating, a sorrow that no doubt shaped the family's path forward.

Around 1840, Warren and Betsey left Wales with their surviving children, relocating to Detroit, where their eighth and final child was born. The family later spent a brief period in Waterloo, Iowa, before ultimately returning to Detroit, perhaps in search of stability after so much loss.

**Charles Reed**, the fourth child of Margaret, **first married Catherine Stryker** on July 15, 1821, in Sheldon. Catherine was the sister of Lucy Maria Stryker—who had married Charles's brother Benjamin—and she was the daughter of Garret and Saloma Stryker.

Charles and Catherine had two children: a daughter, Sarah, who died at just one month old in 1822, and a son, Joseph Addison in 1823. Their time together was heartbreakingly brief. On May 3, 1826, Catherine died at only 20 years of age.



#### **Strykersville Baptist Church Records**

Men are listed on the left side and women are listed on the right side. Charles Reed is the 1st member recorded and served as a Deacon for many years. **Sheldon Historical Society**

Margaret Reed was added by baptism on September 25, 1831.

The following year, on September 18, 1827, **Charles married his second wife, Evaline Sykes.** Just days later, on September 26, Charles's name appears as the first member of the newly formed **Strykersville Baptist Church**, added by letter. Evaline joined the church by baptism on November 16, 1828. Charles and Evaline had four children together and eventually purchased land in Town 8, Range 4—specifically in Lots 31 and 40—not far from Strykersville. There, they established a family farm that not only provided for their children but became a lasting symbol of perseverance, rootedness, and enduring legacy. Remarkably, that homestead remains in the family to this day.

Charles served as a **Deacon of the Strykersville Baptist Church** for many years, playing a key role in the spiritual and civic life of the growing community. ‘Mr. Reed remembered all his life what it was to be in want,’ said Evaline, ‘and no one appealed to him in vain. I remember that we took into our house, and lodged and fed all one winter, an old Revolutionary soldier who came along asking for help. My husband kept him because he had no place to go.’

On March 5, 1828, **Reckord married Asenath Barber.** The couple made their home in Township 9, Range 5, Lot 1—the southeastern most corner of Wales, directly bordering Strykersville. Their land once belonged to Garret Stryker. Reckord and Asenath raised four children on that land, building a life rooted in family and faith. In 1827, Reckord became the second male member added by letter to the newly formed Strykersville Baptist Church, following his brother Charles. Asenath was baptized by the congregation a few months later and together they were active members of the church that anchored much of the community’s spiritual life.

Margaret Reed lived with her daughter Eliza and son Charles in her later years. Margaret died at the home of her daughter on April 24, 1847, and is buried in the Strykersville Pioneer Cemetery.

Evaline described her mother-in-law as a noble and intelligent woman, who in mature life could speak but little English. Evaline shared stories told to her by her husband, “Mrs. Reed was an energetic woman, and succeeded in keeping her little family together; but at times in those early years they must have suffered bitterly from want. Some incidents related by Charles Reed, later in life, bear evidence to their privations. He remembered being sent once to ask for pork rind with which to grease the griddle on which the mother was to fry the cakes that were to be their food. To make it seem not like begging, he took along a home-made twig broom, with which the floor or hearth might be swept. The woman to whom he was sent said, ‘Charles, you may have the rind, but you need not give me a broom for it.’ And Charles Reed related that he remembered sticking the broom, handle down, in a drift on the way home, and making a vow that he would save enough money so that he would not have to beg. This was the same boy who had his feet tied up in rags at his father’s funeral.”

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The author may be reached by email: TainaHoffman@icloud.com

Funding for the restoration of Margaret’s stone was provided by Taina Armstrong Hoffman, 4th great-granddaughter of Israel & Margaret Reed.



Strykersville Pioneer Cemetery:

MARGARET, WIFE OF ISRAEL REED

Photo on the left circa 1980. Photo on right March 2025. Repair and restoration work completed by Brian Daddis Masonry Restoration Sept. 2024. Margaret’s tablet is white marble.

## **Strykersville Pioneer Cemetery: Margaret Reed**



Margaret's stone was covered with leaves and debris and flat on the ground. Only the top half was visible. Little did we know that there was several more feet of stone under our feet.  
Mar. 2017



Reed Hoffman, 5th great grandson of Margaret Reed, digging out sod around stone so that it can be cleaned and prepared for repairs.

Apr. 2023



The full length white marble tablet of Margaret Reed after a trench was dug around stone for cleaning and to assess proper repair strategy.

Apr. 2023



Margaret's marker one year later. Nature was once again threatening to take over the 6' stone.

May 2024



A 30" deep x 8" wide trench was dug to set the bottom 40% of the tablet. Gravel was added to the bottom to prevent the marble from sitting directly on the clay ground.

Oct 2024



Preparing to set the bottom portion of Margaret Reed's stone in the hole. 2" of gravel lined the bottom.  
Brian Daddis

Oct 2024



Tablet is set. Sand/gravel mix is added and compacted on all sides after making sure stone is plumb.  
Brian Daddis

Oct 2024



The tablet is "welded" back together using historical stone epoxy, then braced for stability while it cures.

Oct 2024

## STRYKERSVILLE PIONEER CEMETERY UPDATE

We want to thank everyone who helped out or donated to our Cemetery Restoration Fund. Our cemetery committee has worked hard cleaning the old tombstones with D-2 and they cleaned up beautifully. We had a restoration specialist work on some of the headstones last year. We planned to get back to work in the cemetery soon but since the bad windstorm, when a headstone was crushed by a falling branch, there are concerns as to whether it is safe to be in there working. There are old dead trees that need to come down and branches that are falling off, but they are so high in the trees they will be difficult to trim, so they need to be done professionally. So we are more in need than ever of donations.

My part in this work is to research and record the early settlers, and try to piece together their stories and relationships. The name Hezekiah Bowen Rounds had caught my attention, even before his gravestone was found. H.B. Rounds was Sheldon's Postmaster and a member of the School Board. I found that he came from Massachusetts to Sheldon with his wife, Amelia Balkcom; their children, including Judson and Marcia, and Amelia's mother, Mary Marcy Daggott Balkcom. Mary was the widow of Elijah Balkcom, and their sons, Dexter and Elijah, accompanied their mother. There were several different ways of spelling their name.

Balcom	Dexter	51	06 Feb 1844
Balkcom	Sophia J.	21	21 Feb 1844
Balkcom	Mary Marcy Daggott	92	28 Dec 1853
Balkcom	Dexter	17	15 Oct 1842
Bolkcom	Lida		
Bolkcom	Parthena	58	1796 21 Sep 1855
Bolkcom	Elijah	55	26 Apr 1846
Rounds	Hezekiah Bowen "H.B."		25 Jan 1867
Rounds	Judson		
Rounds	Marcia	16	1845 05 May 1861



Mike Almeter brought this for a display at the Schoolhouse Museum. It is the cash register Sylvester Metzger sold to Harmon & Almeter when they bought his store in 1919. But no one knows how it works! We are hoping to get Mary Jane Almeter to come for a visit and tell us about it.

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

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**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:**

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  - Barbara Logel,
  - Elaine Almeter, Judie Coffey, Steve Lakas, Missy Kehl
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- Sheldon Historian/Archival Curator/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!

**2025-2026 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, 2025 to June 30, 2026
- \$75 Lifetime Membership
- Would like to make a Donation In Memory/Honor of \_\_\_\_\_
- Complimentary - Current Members Only 80+