

Historical Wyoming

Vol. XI

July 1958

No. 4

Arcade, New York

STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES

-Harry S. Douglass-



STRYKERSVILLE BREWERY

Scene in the 1880's. Destroyed by fire, 1909.

Where the headwaters of Buffalo Creek begin their north and westward flow from the township of Java into Sheldon, the village of Strykersville spreads its mile-long street along Route 78. A community of some 500 persons today, in name, a memorial to a pioneer who first cleared the forest at the site 150 years ago.

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HISTORICAL WYOMING

Published quarterly at Arcade, New York, under sponsorship of the Wyoming County Board of Supervisors, by Harry S. Douglass, County Historian; Robert W. McGowan, Associate Editor, and Students of the Arcade Central School Commercial Department.

STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

Garrett Stryker came in the year 1808 from Richfield, Otsego County, N. Y., purchased from the landed proprietors of Sheldon a lot of land containing 360 acres at \$2.25 per acre. This plot was in the extreme southwestern portion of the township along the present Factory Road, running west from the village, and included portions of the Charles Keem farm and westward. By means of an axe he cut a tiny opening in the forest where he built a shanty on the bank of Buffalo Creek, north of where the Strykersville Cheese factory later stood. In 1810, so states the family record, he moved with his family, consisting of a wife and eight children. The youngest child, called Martin, was carried by his mother on horseback a part of the way. After preparing a small piece of land the father was taken ill and his wife sowed it to wheat, harvested it with a sickle and threshed it on a blanket.

One morning the ring of an axe sounded through the vast forest, a welcome break in the stillness and loneliness of the wild frontier. Upon following the sound to its source, Mr. Stryker found he had a neighbor, a Mr. Clifford, on the present farm of Elmer Torge, on Route 78, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the west. At the site of the village that same year, 1808, William Richardson and Philo Stephens are listed as the only other residents. Stephens lived opposite to the Strykers on the west side of the road about one-fourth mile north of the center of the village. Mr. Richardson located his home where Leonard Holmes now resides at the south end of the community. Timothy Kirby, a very early arrival, located about one-fourth mile south of the Baptist Church on the west side of the road. Calvin Rogers, another pioneer, came in 1811.

Garrett, founder of the settlement, found it necessary to go to mill at present Griffin's Mills in Erie County, a distance of 15 miles, marked partly by blazed trees. This was a four-day trip. During one of his early trips to mill, provisions gave out at home and the mother curdled milk and crumbled in maple sugar to appease the hunger of her little ones. Religious meetings were held in their log house and she and her son Joseph were baptized in 1819 by the Rev. Hermon, the first baptism that was administered in Strykersville. Saloma Stryker, the mother, was the "ministering angel" to the sparsely settled region; it was she who nursed the sick, encouraged the fallen, and assisted when death visited a cabin home.

When the Sheldon militia was alerted into active duty during the War of 1812, Garrett Stryker marched with his neighbors to the defense of the Niagara frontier. For years after the war the family
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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)



ST. MARY'S R. C. CHURCH
Erected during 1886

preserved a cannon ball which Stryker picked up at Buffalo the time it burned. He saw it rolling on the ground, it having been shot over from Canada. When the first postoffice was established in the new settlement, the village and office took the name of its pioneer. On his stone, now fallen, it says of him, "The first settler of this village upon which he had the honor of conferring his name." He died June 16, 1845, at the ripe age of 77. Mrs. Stryker died February 26, 1841, aged 64 years. Beside them, in the pioneer burying ground, were buried three children, two daughters and the son, Joseph, who died June 26, 1828, when but 31 years old. His epitaph, reflecting the sentiments of the bereaved, states

"This to the tomb her dearest half consigned
Two tender pledges by his side resigned
Afflicting is the widowed mother's fate,
Alas to mourn her offspring and her mate."

Of a family of twelve children born to Garrett and Salmoa, the last surviving son was Martin, almost a life-long resident of the community who lived just west of the creek beyond his father's old home. Martin's wife was Chloe Sykes, a native of Rutland, Vt., who came to a farm north of Strykersville with her parents in 1816. Her family suffered the privations of pioneer living; the mother died when Chloe was seven years old, one of six children of whom the oldest was but twelve years, and the youngest three months of age. Neighbors furnished milk for the babe and if this was likely to fail they substituted the Indian crust toasted and dropped in water. Their beef was venison, when they were fortunate enough to kill a deer, their mutton was the racoon, their veal the woodchuck, their preserves were thorn apples and mandrakes. When Martin and Chloe were married in 1835, they began housekeeping in a log home, replaced six years later by a frame house.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

The Changing Scene

Only fragments of information survive relative to Strykersville's formative years. According to the 1810 census, but three were living at the site, namely Mr. Stryker, Daniel H. Wooster and Lemuel Castle. It is known that Shadrack Harris was postmaster in 1830, and three years later total receipts at the office were \$9.03 for a twelve-month period. It is said that the first grist mill, erected on the west side of the village and run by water power was built in 1820 by James Arnold, Calvin Kelsey, and John Wares. Back in 1814, Calvin Rogers and Jacob Turner had erected a sawmill. The first distillery, operated by Mr. Richardson, stood opposite his old home, while the first stock of goods was brought in during 1827 by Isaac Bronson.

In 1836, it is stated the community had a grist mill, a carding and cloth dressing mill, tavern, two stores and 15 dwellings. Seven years later the Congregational and Baptist churches had been erected, and the saw mill was in operation.

By the midcentury, the community included more than a score of homes along its main street, two blacksmith shops, a wagon shop, three saw mills at water sites in the vicinity, a store at the corner of Plant Road and Main, a grist mill in operation at the foot of the hill on the road to the present cemeteries, a tannery, a school at the site of the present building, two churches with parsonages, and a postoffice. Strykersville became a busy trading center by the Civil War days, had added a brewery and hotel to its business establishments, offered the products of a shoemaker, cooper shop, harness shop, and three emporiums offered wares.

The late Howard B. Bennion, Arcade, who lived in the village from 1876 to 1919, prepared a memo of recollections some years before his death in 1951. Then, as now, the village limits extended about a mile, going south into the Town of Java about one-fourth of a mile; the center being at the location of the district school and the two portions being known as Up Town and Down Town. The original frame school, long inadequate, was replaced by the present two-room building, the old building was sold at auction and bought by the Independent Order of Good Templars, and from them passed into the possession of the Odd Fellows. Several years later, the store keeper at East Arcade purchased the building, demolished it and rebuilt there and donated the Strykersville land to St. Mary's Church. Mr. Bennion remembered that the site of the Catholic church and school was an open space, and opposite, his father, Owen Bennion, erected a hardware store, a dwelling and barn. The hardware continues in operation and includes the village post office. Three-quarters of a century ago, leading business men were Peter Reisdorf, who ran a saw mill, cider mill, and cooper shop, and later a grist mill, all by steam power. Enos P. Clapp ran a sash and blind factory on the Wales Road (Route 78), his power being created by a team of horses traveling on a large round wooden wheel or platform set at an angle; this

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)



OLD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Society organized 1825. Building dedicated
in 1835. Torn down during 1914

property was used by several enterprises after Mr. Clapp, and wound up also as a cider mill. By the Civil War period, Thomas Battendorf, a brewer from France, established a beer-making business at the north end of the village. On April 10, 1870, the brewery, and adjacent house burned at a loss of \$7,000. It was rebuilt soon after by John Metzger or Frank Glaser at a cost of more than \$9,000 for a hotel, barns and other buildings. There was a large hop yard on the property. Beer was peddled in eights, quarters and halves as far east as Hermitage, north to Cowlesville, south to Arcade, and west to Sardinia. The product was aged in large hogsheds in deep cellars, some one-half mile in length; ice was always put up in the winter in ice houses, packed in sawdust, and when the season was mild with little ice forming, the brewery would cut snow banks into squares to store in the cellars to save the ice crop. Mr. Glaser continued operation of the brewery until August 13, 1909, when again fire swept the large hotel and brewery; nothing remained but the hotel sign. The brewery

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

was rebuilt and flourished but a brief time until Prohibition closed its doors forever. Lastly, the buildings were used as a GLF branch of the Java Village feed mill, then closed. Cider was made there seasonally also. Today, the edifice remains untenanted, a mute reminder of a colorful local industry.

Richardson, Beebe Co., East Aurora, erected a large cheese factory by the 1880's, and was reported to have made 55 tons of cheese soon after it was put into operation. It was then one of six such factories in Sheldon. The Strykersville plant was quite properly located on the north bank of Buffalo Creek on Plant Street (named for a pioneer family). The old store at the corner of Main and Park (now Perry), was first run by Hall & Stephens (within Mr. Bennion's memory), then by Joseph Stanton, a former Supervisor, next by Avery & Fisher, John J. Challis and others. This store carried a general line of dry goods and groceries and ran a peddling cart on the road four days a week summers only. Up Town had an undertaker and cabinet maker by the name of Philip Humbert, who looked after Catholic people mostly. On April 24, 1883, a fire broke out in his place of business. Mr. Humbert helped his wife and two small children from the second floor, went back to get his papers, and fell through the floor and was burned to death. During the same blaze the harness shop and barn of B. M. Warner were destroyed.

Joseph Fisher's boot and shoe shop was a busy place in those days and he employed two or more helpers; Mrs. S. A. Case made hats and bonnets for the ladies; Truman Royce ran a marble shop, no granite was used but marble and grey stone for bases and slabs; Amos Fuller's blacksmith shop, about where the Legion building now stands, had stocks for shoeing oxen as those animals had to be lifted by these timbers in order to shoe them. An apple evaporator works was put into operation on Plant street just west of the corner; it was a sort of stock company and survived many years; in 1881, for example, it took in twelve tons of dried apples. Just east of Pioneer Cemetery, on Perry Road, was a marble shop owned by a German. North of the village is Dutch Hollow Creek, which makes picturesque Johnson's Falls, and here was located an important shingle mill.

The Town Hall

Residents of the village decided to build a Town Hall, funds being raised by subscription and stock was given to subscribers at the value of \$10. per share. The building became a two-story affair, the first floor was rented to any and all kinds of shows and entertainments; the upper floor was rented to the Good Templers until they bought the old school house, then the Macabees moved in to be followed by the Odd Fellows until they too moved to the old school. The Hall did not succeed and was sold for debts, and a part made into the apple evaporator and other buildings. Across the street was the community's tin shop, started by X. Marzolf, and in the upper floor a photographer made tin types and other photos; the building became a dwelling and meat market. Mr. Bennion remembered many of

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)



STRYKERSVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH
Founded in 1808. Organized as a
Separate Church, 1827. Present
Building Completed 1839

the emporiums of trade in the center of the village opposite the Baptist Church and extending down Mill street to the cemeteries. Carriages, sleighs and wagons were turned out by two shops, one run by L. M. Fox. The Chester W. Davis general store carried a large stock and did a lucrative business, being successively operated by W. R. Hoy, Watson Brothers and R. J. Watson. This is now the Dole store, Main and Mill streets.

On the southwest corner of Main and Mill stood the old Andrew Kuster hardware and tin shop and Dutch grocery under the same proprietorship, where foods and beer were sold. Mr. Kuster erected a new store which contained the postoffice, and he was elected as Supervisor of the town; a son, Andrew J. Kuster, succeeded in business until he sold his stock to Owen Bennion, who was conducting a hardware store opposite the Catholic Church. A new blacksmith shop stood near the Baptist Church, run by S. Petz and later by Petz & Daniels. Also opposite the Baptist Church was a saloon and near by a hotel run by B. Marzolf, later by Michael Kirsch; the saloon was operated by William Simons. South of the hotel was another carriage shop, the last place of business until Owen & Howard Bennion built and operated a furniture store, later selling carriages, wagons, farm tools, fertilizers, etc. Howard Bennion succeeded as owner and continued its operation until 1919.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

Mill Street, dropping sharply from Main and going west to cross Buffalo Creek, was a beehive of industry for several generations. Conrad Hyman ran a grist and saw mill near the creek, and during the early 1880's renovated the establishment at a cost of \$5,000 to the extent that his grist mill had a capacity for grinding 400 bushels a day, and besides excellent waterpower had a steam engine for contingent use. The industry was later known as C. Hyman & Sons. Like so many small town industries, it was burned not many years ago and not rebuilt due to changing economic conditions. Across the creek was a cooper shop whose history went back to Civil War days or earlier, and one of the best-remembered proprietors was Peter Herrmann.

Some Lore of the Village

Every village has a history of humor and pathos, and an event which Mr. Bennion well remembered occurred in a little Dutch grocery up on Plant Street. The proprietor was Henry Mertges. This was a favorite hangout for men who had time to spare, time to speculate on the problems of the day, ears to catch the latest bit of gossip, and inclinations to hatch plots on innocent victims. The story is that the grocer got in a nice supply of small smoked hams, the aroma from which was so enticing that appetites must be satisfied by hook or crook. The best approach was deemed to be that of treating the proprietor to a generous supply of local and imported brew, and when his powers of observation were dulled to enjoy a feast. No sooner planned than accomplished. The hams, crackers and other dainties vanished while the grocer played an unwitting host.

Recovering from the deception, Mr. Mertges vowed to even things up. Quietly he bought up a number of dogs, killed them and smoked the hams. When all was ready, he passed out word that he had just gotten in another nice supply of hams. The same gang gathered as before, the host helped them to generous portions, and when all were congratulating themselves that the fare was as delicious as the first stolen goods, the proprietor quite casually announced the nature of the second meal. It is said that he was nearly lynched by the gang, but it is safe to assume that it was a lesson never forgotten.

In the center of the village lived Deacon Joab Wooster, a good Baptist and a professional millwright. His labors took him all over the countryside, his reputation being enhanced by his excellent workmanship and the fact that he outlived six wives, the seventh having survived him. His home is the present Kindel residence. Speaking of deacons also reminded Strykersvilleites of Deacon Melancthon Abbott, of the Congregational Church, and Deacon Benjamin Rosebrook who came to town as a Bible tract peddler. Miss Marcia Robinson, a spinster, decided to take him and he remained to add his voice to the choir of the Congregational Church. All these men were pillars of their denominations. Another odd man was Eri Balcom, a retired whaler, a short fat man, who used to tell some tall stories of his early sea life. Hiram Cobleigh, one of the men who manufactured carriages,

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)



GRAVE OF STRYKERSVILLE'S FOUNDERS
 Still standing in the Pioneer Cemetery are
 these memorials to Garrett and Salmoa Stryker.

used to tell tall stories, and was fond of sponging his tobacco off his customers. Fred Lutenger, a German photographer, had a farm at Hunter's Creeks, nearby, and would come to town to take pictures three days each week, his first shop was Up Town in the undertaking rooms, later Downtown in the Charles Spitz shoe shop. He must have gotten discouraged as he hung himself on his farm.

One of the village's wealthiest men was Charles Richardson Sr., father of Charles Jr., and grandfather of the Richardson Brothers who at one time made cheese boxes, apple barrels, etc. at Java Village. The pioneer Richardson, who died in 1867 at the age of 79 years, had come to the site of the village in 1808, and settled where Leonard Holmes now lives. He was a devout Baptist, but did "sample" the product of his distillery occasionally, a practice that was frowned upon by the members, and did draw official censure for his failings of the flesh. He owned all the land east of Main Street and north well beyond the Baptist Church. He gave the land for the church and parsonage. In granting deeds, he deeded only to the east bounds of the street from his home to the church whenever he sold off lots for residences. He said he wanted to be able to walk to church on his own property, and in addition, each purchaser of a lot had to agree that he and his successors would keep all fences in good repair. His distillery was set up on his farm and there he converted grain into whiskey which sold for about 25¢ a gallon. While much of his farm was in the town of Java, he also owned a large tract of land on what was known as Saunders Hill, later as Marzolf Hill. He was so pious that he would allow no work of any kind on Sundays nor permit anyone to read except from the Bible or other good works.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

Mr. Bennion also remembered an old Frenchman, Charles DeBancourt by name, who lived on the Bartz road north of Plant's Corners. He was a cooper by trade, also ran a small farm, was a tall man weighing nearly 200 pounds. Every so often he would walk to Strykersville, a distance of around four miles, and stay all day. He would go marching home again singing old country marching songs as he was a soldier when a young man. Amos H. Castle, Esq. was another of the early settlers, very well off by the standards of those days, and served as a justice of the peace for many terms. A familiar figure in the vicinity was Chandler Barber, a surveyor, who traveled about in a two-wheeled cart and made use of field notes prepared from those of Joseph Ellicott.

Location of a cabin or home to a good supply of water was most essential. There was always a good supply of water on the east side of Strykersville where the first wells were dug and stoned up, about three or four feet in diameter and some about 25 feet deep. Water was drawn by an oaken bucket by means of a wooden roll run by a crank and a two-inch wide strap; at the surface the bucket caught on a trip that dumped the water through a spout and into the pail, all of which was attached to an open rack or crib. Later chain pumps were used with wooden pump logs of cucumber wood, in length around 12 feet, about 4x4, and bored with a two-inch hole. The logs were joined by means of a wooden coupler bound with iron rings. Later, the same logs were used in a suction pump operated by a handle and were known as stock pumps. Subsequently, iron pipes were driven for water and several flowing wells were located, some as deep as 127 feet, all of which flowed for years. The usual method of locating a well was by means of a crotch stick plan employed by certain individuals who made it a business of locating water.

On the Harvey Stevenson farm on the west side of the village was what was known as the "Robber's Cave," where it was reported a local tough gang secreted their stolen loot. Mr. Bennion remembered around the year 1883, it was still visible on the farm on the Creek Road west of Buffalo Creek. The cave was west of the farm house at the edge of the woods. It was a dug-out affair with a ledge of rock overhead, and 75 years ago there remained a door of wood with a hasp to lock the same; about were bushes which almost obscured the site. Boys bent on exploring the hideout were shooed away by the owner. It is said that the gang of thieves used to operate throughout the vicinity, stealing almost anything that looked like profit to them, including horses, cattle, clothes from a wash line, and made entry into houses and places of business. One of the gang, the only one then alive, was one Beebe, an elderly man with a head of red hair and a long beard. Apparently they were a clever group, able to move goods rapidly from place to place, disguise them, and dispose through other underworld outlets. Whether they were ever successfully apprehended is not known.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

The Changing Scene

Strykersville was destined never to have a railroad connection with the outside world, but stood ten miles from a depot in East Aurora, eight miles from the Pennsylvania at Protection, and 4½ miles from the Tonawanda Valley Railroad (Arcade & Attica) at Java Center. In 1883, there was strong talk of an electric railroad line from East Aurora, via Strykersville, Java Village, to Java Center, where it was to junction with the T. & V. RR. The route was surveyed, and much preliminary grading done with hand labor and teams and shovels. It was projected further to Java Lake, where, it was thought, a busy summer colony could be developed.

In spite of the handicap of no railroad, the community continued to prosper as a trading center with three churches, a school, and mercantile enterprises providing the more essential services and goods. In the early 1880's, so a news clipping states, the village had not a single dwelling of brick or stone, but all frame houses and except for very few, well painted and in good condition. Daily papers in English and German, and 601 weekly papers, printed in English, plus 41 in the German and French languages were received at the postoffice. Another contemporary account states that a large part of the population then were born in the vicinity and resident more than thirty years. The pioneers were nearly gone but their original homesites were often occupied by their children. Interspersed with this New England stock were Germans, many immigrants, but a majority also natives of the region.

The columns of the Attica News recorded a Cleveland and Hendricks rally at Strykersville in the autumn of 1884. In an apple orchard adjacent to Frank Glaser's hotel was erected a speaker's stand and picnic facilities were available. Although it was a chilly Saturday, between 700-800 men and women rallied to the Democratic banner. The Strykersville group, known as the "Sheldon and Java Marching Club," received visiting clubs from Attica, Protection, Varysburg, Wales Center and Cowlesville. A special train carried the Attica club to Java Center, from which spot they were conveyed to Java Village and there met by the Java and Sheldon boys, 80 strong, which number was increased by visitors. At Java Village began the march along present Route 78 to Strykersville. The mounted Cleveland clubs from Protection and Wales Center made a fine display, it was said. The entire company moved four abreast to the music of Grover Barnum's Cornet Band of Cowlesville. The band played during the evening, and one of the finest things heard was the song, "Sweet Galilee." Two or three speakers enlivened the gathering by speeches, and the whole affair was deemed as enthusiastic for "Honest Grover."

That same year, the Olean Times reported "Quite an oil excitement prevails near Strykersville. A short time ago Quincy Whaley had a well drilled to the depth of 100 feet and found gas in considerable quantities, while the wastes smell strongly of oil. There is talk of organizing a company to put down a test well." We have no

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

further information on the progress of this "boom" but it is symptomatic of the agitation throughout the area of Sheldon and Java to locate oil or gas. Small quantities have been found as far south as Curriers and in Humphrey's Hollow to the north.

The Germans who settled in Sheldon by the 1830's were known as the "Dutch," but it was some years before they moved into what is now the Strykersville area. They were mainly farmers, very thrifty and excellent citizens. In addition to general farming, they kept sheep and processed quantities of wool. During the tannery era, they repaired to the hemlock woods and peeled bark. Their society centered about the church at Straub's Corners, at the crossroads store and tavern, in the parochial school at the Corners, and at festivals and customs imported from the Fatherland. German Protestants still people the area north of the village in what is known as "Dutch Hollow" and there a church, tavern and store existed from the early days.

In the absence of any records, the earliest German residents of Strykersville are believed to have included Conrad Hyman, residing on the Mill Road, or Mill Street, west from Route 78 in the heart of the village. Mr. Hyman erected a series of mills at a water site on Buffalo Creek. In the Bartz Gulf, north of the village, and towards Johnson's Falls, Peter Reisdorf opened a mill for processing timber. Andrew Kuster was an early merchant and John Metzger was possibly the first owner of the brewery at the north end of the village. In the course of time, these families populated many homes and farms, but they, too, have been replaced by residents whose roots do not reach back into the historical development of the village.

The name of Col. Arden Woodruff appears among the annals of the Strykersville area. He attained a reputation as an abolitionist and was one of the local operators of the Underground Railroad which aided slaves during their northward journey. His home was a "station" into which were fed fugitives from stations in Arcade, Warsaw, and Erie County.

Three cemeteries have been established within the village. The Pioneer burying ground on Perry Road was in use as early as 1811 when a daughter of Garrett Stryker, the pioneer, died Nov. 1st at the age of three years. It has been said that a daughter of Lemuel Paul was the first to die in the settlement but no stone remains. This cemetery, surrounded by a crumbling wall of stone, is completely overgrown with bushes. All of the pioneer dead were interred here until the establishment of the present Strykersville Cemetery in 1867. As heretofore mentioned, Garrett Stryker and members of his family are still there, as are such families as Balcom, Arnold, Emery, Farwell, McElwain, Mason, Moore, Olds, Paul, Potter, Proper, Rogers, and Warner. Omri Warner of Massachusetts who enlisted in April 1777 for nearly eight months, and on several occasions after, is the only Revolutionary soldier known to have been buried here. His death occurred in the nearby Town of Wales, Dec. 20, 1841. Some bodies
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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

were removed to the newer grounds and were found to have been contained in old-style coffins, not caskets, and not in what was later called an outside or rough box. An association maintains the present village cemetery on Mill Street while St. Mary's Church uses an adjacent plot for its dead. These grounds have been given such care as economic conditions permit.

Strykersville Today

Upwards of 500 persons reside today in what could be called the village area. Many new homes have been erected in recent years which gives the mile-long Main Street an air of residential prosperity. The once thriving shops and stores have yielded to the march of progress and have gradually dwindled in number and complexion. Among the enterprises today are a grocery, bowling alley and hotel, the Hotel Crystal, a hardware in which the postoffice is located, a garage, four gas stations, a monument sales shop, a radio repair shop, a bottled gas business and a saw mill. Anton Johnson operates a welding and tank construction business not far from where Garrett Stryker first settled; and the Marzolf Manufacturing Company produces egg washers. Patented in 1953, these "egg scouring machines," were the development of Norbert F. Marzolf who devised a novel device that is sufficiently simple and economical to be employed by small scale poultrymen. According to information filed at the time of patent, the machine comprises a suitable housing with inlet and outlet openings through which eggs are respectively fed and discharged one by one. Included are such parts as a conveyor belt, a motor, and a supply of cleansing solution which drips upon an array of fabric scrubber discs that act upon the eggs. It handles various size eggs without sorting, turns them and washes them in a solution not previously used.

Within the year past, Six Star Post 637, American Legion, has erected new headquarters at the center of the village, opposite the Baptist Church. Two churches remain, St. Mary's and the Baptist; a public school with two teachers, and St. Mary's School are in operation. High school students are sent by buses to Arcade and Holland. The community supports through its Fire Department a band known as the "Band Excelsior," which makes appearances in parades in the neighboring communities. Residents are members of the Java-Strykersville Kiwanis Club. Michael Valente M. D. and C. J. Holden, D. V. M. are available for professional work. The community telephone system includes service throughout much of Java township and is known as the Gladstone exchange with dial headquarters recently constructed at Java Village. The Genesee Valley Bus Lines have provided service along Route 20A for some years.

So continues life at the headwaters of Buffalo Creek at a spot where a century and a half ago Garrett Stryker, a farmer of German ancestry, first began to clear the forest on his 360 acre farm. About lay fertile farms and as considerable traffic moves along

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

Strykersville's Main Street it is evident that a small-town atmosphere lends a quiet charm that is characteristic of many western New York rural communities. As the community reviews its past in a sesquicentennial observance this July there will be an awareness that Change and Progress will come in the tomorrows as in the yesterdays.

Strykersville Baptist Church

As old as the community itself is the Strykersville Baptist Church, which originated about Sheldon Center the very summer that Garrett Stryker purchased land in the valley of Buffalo Creek. Church records open with this statement, "Sunday the 17 July Elder Joel Butler preach'd and after sermon came Joshua and Susannah Gates William Stancliff Sally Sanders and was rece'vd after Baptism Communion in the Church. 6 of August 1808 - the Church met inquired and found the union good."

Sheldon's first and most prominent settlers were among the founding group that gathered to establish what was called the Second Baptist Church of Christ in Sheldon. Included were such families as Marvin and Hannah Brace, Levi and Rhoda Street, he the pioneer mail carrier; Deacon Seth and Abigail Gates, parents of the Hon. Seth M. Gates, noted abolitionist and Member of Congress; Edward and Lois Brau; Lemuel Castle; Sally Sanders; William and Lucy Stancliff; Joshua and Susanna Gates; Robert and Margaret Carr; Job Matteson; Catie Turner; Pelatiah and Affa Case; Bela Bibbins; Affa Loomis; Darius and Elizabeth Cross; Ezekiel and Anna Harris; Ezra Luddon; Elizabeth Rockwell; William Washburn; Justin Loomis; William Herrick; Abel Buel; Sary Brau; Rebecca Wording; Cyrus Andrus; Ammy Scovil; Susan Dingman; Asahel and Sarah Hurlburt; Elias Gillet; Sarah Noys; David S. Wooster; Mary Hubbard; Parmela Rawson; Polly Faunches; Capt. Charles B. Street, members of the Hamilton family and many others. This organization held its meetings at the schoolhouse situated at the north end of the present site of Strykersville and at different places near Sheldon Center, and in the homes of some of the members.

From its onset, discipline within the group was strict and while usually they "found the union good" there were discords. Gossiping members were summoned to prove their charges; Sister Cathie or Cathy Turner, wife of the first settler at Turner's Corners, was complained against for allowing balls in her house and for "un-Christian conversation" against those who leveled criticism concerning her public character. In the course of the dissension it was thought that Mrs. Turner, apparently a woman of business capabilities, ought not to have acted in business affairs "as her husband ought to rule his own house." She had brought suit against one of the members, an act which was inconsistent with the covenant of the church. It became a splendid tradition within this church and the Strykersville body to encourage young men to enter the ministry. On Sept. 1, 1810, the record stated "Br. Case Mod. for the Day Br. Carr was cal'd on to know his mind with respect to improving in publick 2 the Church gave him leve to Speak and teach in publick as his mind should be Led 3 appointed a Conference at his house on the 18 instant..."

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

October 6, 1810, at a meeting apparently in the home of Lemuel Castle, Esq., "a number of Brethren from the first Church (Attica) met in a General Meeting with us and a refreshing seson it was..." This was the very first gathering of Baptist churches in western New York and the initial step in the creation of the Holland Purchase Baptist Association, which at one time included numerous churches west of the Genesee River. On Feb. 2, 1811, Seth Gates was chosen as deacon and was thereafter, both in Sheldon and Warsaw, known by that title. On the first Wednesday in June 1811, at the home of Mr. Castle, with Messrs. Carr, Case, Stancliff and Gates as delegates from the Sheldon church, a Baptist Conference was formed, the formal beginning of the Holland Purchase Association. On August 1, 1812, the Sheldon Church set the yearly conference at Mr. Castle's in the month of October. In subsequent months there are references to dealings with the Attica and Willink (Aurora) churches. In November, 1813, the church met for business, but adjourned to attend the funeral of Miss Fales. At "Candle light" the meeting resumed.

Military activities incident to the War of 1812 and the invasion of the Niagara Frontier interrupted the serenity of the Sheldon settlements. In December, 1813, it was voted that covenant meetings begin at one o'clock P. M., and that members of the church "are at Liberty to join in a society by the name of a baptist religious society." On January 9, 1814, the clerk wrote "this Day was a Day of alarm and greate fear of the British and indians and no meeting was attend.." Monthly meetings continued during succeeding weeks of anxiety but no record was kept other than the dates and the usual words, "the union good." Throughout the remainder of 1814-15, until the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, religious activities were at a low ebb, summed up succinctly in the record (4 of Novr. 1815), "the union good and from this to the 3 of June 1816 the Church was in fellowship and kepp the stated meeting but reciev'd no Members..." On May 31, 1817, upon receipt of a letter from the brethren in the northern part of the Old Town of Sheldon, permission was granted for them to erect a church by themselves.

Church financing in 1821 was determined by a vote "to estimate the property of the Brs. of the Chh for the purpose of raising such sums of money as should be thought proper by an average tax. Appointed Brs. Buel and Stancliff to make the estimate." This was an early recognition of the "ability-to-pay" theory of taxation. That February the church voted to raise \$45. to be appropriated for the support of preaching by Elder William Herrick.

On Sept. 17, 1827, and "after hearing the Request of the Brethren living at the South West Part of this Chh to be Set of as a Distinct Body. Resolved to call a Council consisting of Elders and Brethren from the Chhes of Aurora, 1 & 2 in Sheldon Bennington and Orangeville for the above purpose." Forty-eight members were granted dismissal, October 7, that year, as constituent members of a new church to be known as the Wales and Sheldon Church, and with that action, the Strykersville Baptist Church was born of the parent body. Frequent meetings of the older church were held through 1836, and but two items appear thereafter, the last, Jan. 4, 1840.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

From an 1871 historical sketch of the Strykersville Church, it is stated that the first Baptist settler in the settlement was Deacon Tilton Eastman, who located on the later Charles Mason farm, about the year 1818. "he became the originator (under God) of the first Baptist worship in this community, being a devout man and fearing God with all his house. The neighbors were collected and public worship was held in private homes and barns. Garrett Stryker's barn, on the west side of Buffalo Creek, was used as a place of worship for some time. Rev. Elias Harmon and Rev. Mr. Goodrich, were among the first to preach the gospel to the people." The Rev. David S. Wooster alternated with the Rev. Harmon and supplied the people from time to time.

The Baptist Church of Wales and Sheldon (the Strykersville Baptist Church after Oct. 14, 1833) was formally organized at a council which met at the Strykersville schoolhouse with representatives of five neighboring churches in attendance. Rev. Harmon was moderator while the Rev. Whitman Metcalf preached the recognition sermon from Acts 9, verse 31. The following November, the Rev. Daniel S. Wooster became the first regular pastor. Fourteen males and thirty-four women constituted the chartering group of the church. They were Elder David S. Wooster, Tilton Eastman, William Richardson, Dexter Bolkcom, Samuel Cook, Samuel N. Cook, Norman Besse, Peleg Havens, Jr., Charles Reed, Record Reed, Jacob S. Sisco, Martin Stryker, Amory Barber, and Ithamar Ackley. Also, Salome Stryker, Sally Bennett, Sibyl Lawrence, Laura Ward, Eliza Mason, Mahala Eastman, Hannah Stryker, Fanny Richardson, Jerusha Stevens, Margaret Eastman, Lois Eastman, Anna Wooster, Persis Westcott, Susan Aimes, Candace Godfrey, Almira Moore, Lydia Havens, Harriet Lee, Sophronia Wares, Mary Stevens, Betsey Potter, Alzina Potter, Louisa McElwain, Rhoda Lawrence, Hepsabeth Warner, Fanny Sisco, Anna Stevens, Chloe Cook, Desire Bolkcom, Susan Besse, Sarah Besse, and Roxana Cook.

At the first meeting of the new church, convened Oct. 5, 1827, about a mile west of the north end of the present village at a schoolhouse, five persons were received as members. Church and covenant meetings were held variously in Wales, in schools in Strykersville and near the present site of Java Village, known at first as Gurney's Mills. In the fall of 1827, the church tried affiliation with the Holland Purchase Association at a meeting in Pike Hollow; it was also decided that a roll call of members be taken at covenant and church meetings and those not present were to give a written excuse for non-attendance. Tilton Eastman was named deacon and Nial Eastman, clerk, that year. Tithes were levied in proportion to one's ability, and for the two brethren not in agreement with the plan, they were permitted to pay according to their own pleasure. Arrangements were made for bestowing "a reasonable compensation on Bro. Havens for bedding and boarding Bro. Townsend while laboring with them this season." Only male members were allowed to vote and church business was to be conducted with closed doors. The first pastor, Rev. Wooster, was granted a salary of \$50 per year for preaching one-half the time at "the Center," (schoolhouse), one-fourth time in Wales and one-fourth in the south school near Java Village.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

The church prospered in membership and Christian influence. Like the parent church, the Strykersville group had to cope with the evils incident to intemperance due to the large number of distilleries. Men, after uniting with the church, fell back into their old habits and it sometimes became necessary to appoint a committee to labor with these brethren, and, if possible, persuade them to return and "Resume their travel with the church." Sometimes this was of no avail and in a few instances it was the sad duty of the church to withdraw the hand of fellowship from him.

November 12, 1831, Charles Reed was named deacon, and the next July, Stephen Emery was chosen to the same office. On March 31, 1834, the Rev. Wooster resigned, to be followed by the Rev. James Reed, May 1834 to May 1836. Levi Reed of the congregation was granted a "license to improve his gift in word and doctrine." Martin Stryker, clerk for three years, resigned and he was succeeded by H. B. Rounds, who held the post from Feb. 17, 1833 to Sept. 17, 1853. In a plain and legible hand, Mr. Rounds kept a complete and illuminating record throughout a score of years. In 1835, Rounds was chosen a deacon, also served as a choir leader and at his death left legacies to the church and to missionary agencies. Back in 1835, a female "Domestic and Foreign Mission Society" was aided in educating men for the ministry and during the Civil War the group sent aid to the soldiers and the Freedmen through the "Christian Commission."

Charles Richardson Sr., an early benefactor of the church, also left legacies amounting to \$2,500 to different benevolent Baptist societies, besides giving \$1,000 to the University of Rochester in its early days.

A series of revivals and additions to membership marked the pastorate of the Rev. Reed, while in March 1836, Articles of Faith and Practice were adopted, and used for generations of members. In February, 1836, a society was formed with the following board of trustees: Charles Reed, Charles Richardson, H. B. Rounds, Dexter Balcom, Calvin Rogers and James Stryker. The present church site was agreed upon, Mr. Richardson donating it as his partial gift. Calvin Rogers was named a committee to circulate a subscription for the erection of a building, and in January 1837, he was able to report the promise of sums amounting to \$2,542. It was "unanimously resolved to give the job of building the said meeting house, or house of public worship, for the said Baptist Church and Society, to Calvin Rogers for the sum of twenty-two hundred dollars (\$2200), to be built fifty-one (51) feet long by forty (40) feet wide, of good materials, with a porch, session room, belfry and steeple; the whole to be well finished and painted, agreeable to a drawn plan and written contract." During the next two years the work was in progress. Although the church had applied to the Holland Purchase Association the year of its formation, it was affiliated with the Genesee River Association until September 1836, when it was admitted to the Holland group at a time when it reported 119 members. The Rev. Edward Covel served the church briefly through 1836-37, when he left and the Rev. Eliada Blakesley preached for nine months after January, 1838, salary \$300 per year.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

Dedication of the Church

The builder, Mr. Rogers, having advised that the church was completed early in 1839, plans were set for its dedication. It is presumed that Mr. Rogers followed a usual custom of standing on his head at the highest part of buildings erected by him; at least that tradition has persisted concerning other edifices erected by him. The 18th of April was a day set apart for the consecration of the church. Rev. Whitman Metcalf of Sardinia led with the invocation; and also gave the dedication prayer and sermon from Psalms 26, verse eight. Congregational singing and group numbers by the choir provided the ministry of music. It was voted to hold monthly covenant meetings on the first Saturday before the first Sunday of each month, a practice continued well into the 20th century.

With a new church, the congregation was without a pastor until the engagement of the Rev. Dexter P. Smith during the summer of 1839. He was a man of strong faith and great zeal and during the six years of his pastorate, he baptized 132 persons. On a single day, after revival meetings in neighboring schoolhouses, there were 92 standing in the aisles of the new church waiting to receive the hand of fellowship from the pastor. During the winter of 1841-42, Amy J. Barber described the situation thus: "Sabbath after Sabbath in mid-winter the Buffalo Creek was visited where Elder Smith baptized men and women, boys and girls, old and young. In order to do this it was often necessary to cut holes in the ice, but these people cared little for the cold, for their hearts were burning with divine love." Of the converts that season, four were destined to enter the ministry of the Baptist denomination: Rev. Darius Paul went to the mission field in eastern Iowa where he served churches for more than twenty years; the Rev. Alfred B. Satterlee died in the mission field in India; Rev. Charles Read served several churches but died young also, while the Rev. Daniel Read, D.D. became president of Shurtleff College, Alton, Illinois for several years, was pastor of the First Baptist Church, Brooklyn, and churches in Minnesota and Illinois, and climaxed his career as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Los Angeles.

Pastors after the resignation of the Rev. Smith were the Rev. Chauncey Wardner, 1845-47, during whose stay ten persons residing at North Java were received by letter and at their request were then set off as a branch of the Strykersville Church at North Java, and Rev. Wardner preached there one-fourth of the time. The Rev. Harvey Munger labored with the church from September 1847, until December, 1848, when he left for the West as had Rev. Smith. He was succeeded for a period of two years by the Rev. C. Garrison, who left the church in the spring of 1851. That same spring, Dr. James Ives was selected as a deacon, an office he held nearly thirty years until his death. He also served as church clerk and Sunday School head besides being church treasurer for the last 25 years of his life. In addition to all these other duties, he found time to take a leading part in the church choir as a tenor singer. He was the fortunate

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

possessor of a quaint old lap organ which he carried to and from each service, and which he pumped with his elbows while he played, and added his voice to the choir. In 1851, a bell, costing \$300, was procured from the Troy Bell Foundry and hung in the belfry, and in September of that year the Holland Purchase Association met in the church. During the fall and winter of 1851-52, the Rev. James Reed served as supply pastor.

On June 5, 1852, the church extended a call to the Rev. A. S. Kneeland. His pastorate was extended to thirteen fruitful years during which 158 were baptized. Within two weeks after Dec. 24, 1853, \$1,000 was pledged to erect a parsonage; the present site was secured from Mr. Richardson, and a \$700 pastor's residence was put up.

For some years German Protestants had lived in the vicinity. During 1855, the church persuaded the Rev. Arlon Hausler, a young licentiate, to work among them, and to support him for that purpose for one year. His labors yielded many converts and the Strykersville church continued its support until the spring of 1863, when the German group was recognized as an independent organization under the name of "Holland German Church", with a meeting house at Hunter's Creek near Strykersville.

The Rev. Kneeland resigned in the spring of 1865, closing out a most successful pastorate during which 154 were baptized, 42 of them being Germans. He had been assisted after the Rev. Hausler, by the Rev. C. Rantz, who had immigrated from Germany and labored among his fellow countrymen on the West Hill and at Hunter's Creek. Meanwhile, three other Strykersville Baptists entered the ministry, namely the Rev. Jonathan Harrington, the Rev. R. A. Shaw, and Rev. Marcus Mason. The Rev. Mason, together with his wife, went to Assam, where among uncivilized tribes they erected a mission station. With the help of another missionary couple, they began the translation of the native Garo language into writing, and in turn into a native Bible. During a visit to America, Mrs. Mason died from the effects of her overseas tenure, and she was buried at Strykersville. Rev. Mason returned to the mission field with machinery and there established a native industrial training school; in addition he invented machines adapted to the needs of the natives. His sister later assisted him.

The successor to Rev. Kneeland was the Rev. S. Keyes, who came in May 1865, and after an all too brief pastorate died July 8, 1868. The church clerk, H. M. Clark, died a few days before and the church lost faithful pillars, but they had seen the renovation of the building completed. For a time, there was no pastor, but in succession, the Revs. George Lewis, J. P. Islip, Rev. P. J. Wardner as supply, A. Maynard until 1874, Rev. R. H. Colby until 1877 and the Rev. Thomas Seyse were in Strykersville. September 26-27, 1877, were the dates of a semi-centennial to which former members and pastors were drawn. Record Reed was the only member of the church still in affiliation after fifty years. In October 1883, the Rev. Seyse resigned and his successor in 1884 was the Rev. D. D. Lowell. During the

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

summer of 1888, the new Baptist Church at Java Village was completed and dedicated as a chapel of the parent church on October 25th. In November 1891, about 50 members took letters from the old church and organized themselves into the Java Village Baptist Church, and were so recognized, Dec. 15, 1891. The Java Village church cost \$2,500.

In May 1888, the Rev. J. Gilchrist opened a pastorate of nearly 2½ years, and he was followed by the Rev. W. A. Huntington, who was the first pastor to be regularly assigned also to the Java Village church. After one year, the Rev. E. H. Hovey served both churches for two years and was followed by the Rev. J. J. Hammer. Rev. Seyse came again in September 1897, and continued until his death in 1903. Recent pastors have been the Rev. Alexander Dewar, 1904-08; Rev. F. J. W. Chubb after May 1909; Rev. Alfred Jeffries around 1915; Rev. John Bauer; Rev. Benjamin Croft for eleven years; Rev. David Thompson, and lastly as supply, the Rev. Robert Wacker. In November, 1957, the last regular services were held, and with but fifteen members left, it is doubted that the 150-year old institution will ever reopen. Probably the aggregate membership of the church would approach 10,000, and few rural parishes can point to a record of achievement insofar as membership going into the ministry is concerned. The parent church, formed but five years after the first settlement in Sheldon radiated an influence that reached into the lives of many, and it is the painful duty of the present generation, perhaps, to write the final chapter to a glorious history.

St. Mary's Church

For some four decades following the first residence of German Catholics in the vicinity they journeyed to Straub's Corners, Sheldon, to attend mass, and in the churchyard there are buried the pioneers who left the fatherland to escape military conscription and political restrictions of despotic governments.

It is written that in the summer of 1865, Bishop Ryan commissioned the Rev. Martin Phillips to organize a new parish at Strykersville. At that time, he was pastor of St. Vincent's Church, Buffalo, and was chosen for the task inasmuch as relatives lived in the village and they promised to board and room and assist him until the new parish would be able to support their pastor. Father Phillips came in November of that year and secured the town hall, which had recently been erected, (no longer standing) for the use of the Catholics of the area on Sundays. There he said the first mass, Nov. 8, 1865. The services on this occasion concluded with the singing of the hymn, "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name", which expressed the jubilant feelings of the congregation as they faced the future with the prospect of a church and pastor of their own. On the following Sunday, Frank Glaser, Andrew Kuster, Peter N. George and Martin Winch were elected trustees and preparations were made to erect a church.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

The cornerstone of the new and present building was laid on the 23rd of May, 1886. The building was ready for dedication on the 4th of September of the same year and the ceremony was performed by Bishop Stephan Vincent Ryan, D.D. of Buffalo, assisted by Rev. J. Sorg, the Rev. Dr. Hoelscher, the Rev. F. Fromholtz, the Rev. J. Reilly, the Rev. T. Urich, the Rev. T. Voss and the Rev. P. Trauscht. Father Phillips was succeeded by the Rev. Frank Trautlein, who remained but a short time when he was succeeded by the Rev. Adolphus Bergmann, and then Father Jac Bubenheim came for a short period, until the Rev. Anthony Adolph was appointed pastor.

Father Adolph remained pastor until September, 1891, when Rev. Aloysius Huber was named to the parish. As in nearly all the smaller parishes, the pastors of Strykersville remained only a short time in this parish. The Rev. John B. Stemler succeeded Father Huber after a few months, and then came Rev. Gerard H. Gysen. The Rev. Anthony Adolph came for a second time, to be followed by the Rev. L. Bastian, who remained until 1901. The Rev. Jacob Franz arrived that year, organized several societies in the parish and was the first to advocate a school. St. Mary's elementary school did not open until the fall of 1908 after the Rev. Anthony Veit became pastor. The school came under charge of the Sisters of St. Francis, Williamsville, and has been under their guidance ever since. Enrollment averages about 100 and demands a faculty of about three teachers. The Rev. Francis Dehlinger became pastor in 1912, and remained until 1920 when his successor was the Rev. John Marencovick. During this 21-year period, Father Marencovick organized the Holy Name Society. He left St. Mary's in 1941, when he was succeeded by the Rev. Charles G. Gampp, organizer of the parish's Altar and Rosary Society. Father Joseph J. Vogel succeeded Father Gampp in 1946, and then in 1951 he was followed by the Rev. Joseph E. Kocher. He served the parish very ably until his sudden death, Nov. 7, 1957. The Rev. Eugene Wagner is now serving as parish administrator.

St. Mary's has a churchyard where annual picnics have been an occasion for the reunion of former residents of the community and friends of the parish. Doubtless at the formation of the church, a cemetery was laid out just to the west of the Strykersville community burying grounds. The earliest tombstone death found is that of Andrew Kuster, who died October 30, 1885, a few days before the formation of the parish. For some years the upper floor of the school was used for public gatherings, dances and social events, but increasing attendance at the school has necessitated conversion of this facility into classrooms.

Strykersville Fire Department

At a meeting held in St. Mary's hall, June 11, 1913, the present Fire Department was organized as a volunteer company to replace an earlier unofficial fire brigade appointed at meetings of the community. The first officers elected were James Barber, president; Charles Kihm, vice-president; L. A. Phillips, secretary; and Howard B. Ben-nion, treasurer.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

Department officers elected included David Carter, foreman; Albert Glaser, William Hersch, Frank Smith and Ivan Richardson, foreman; Mr. Bennion, Ernest Holmes and Elvan Richardson, trustees; Herman Fromholzer, fire alarmer; and Rev. Fred Chubb, second fire alarmer. Other charter members included Roy Watson, Edward Fontaine, Harry Hersch, Floyd Musty, Jacob Kensinger, Albert Brass, Millard Holmes, Paul Marzolf, Henry Keyser, Roy Richardson, Roy Carr, Charles Keem and August Metzger. Early members included Father Dahlinger as fire alarmer, Jacob Herrman, Charles Stryker, Frank Unger, John Kensinger, Peter Kihm, Dr. Frank Paul, Herbert Merlau, Earnest Barber and Maurice Brass. Dues were \$1.00 a year.

Committees were appointed to produce a hook and ladder wagon, to buy ladders, pails, ropes, axe pike and other tools necessarily connected with the fire wagon. The total cost of these accessories was not to exceed \$60.00. Meetings were set for the first Monday of each month and the practice has continued these forty-five years. The salary of the secretary has continued little more than the \$2.50 each year since 1913. An alarm system was devised, consisting of a series of rings on the church bells, the number of strokes indicating the part of the village where the fire was located. Fire ladders absent without excuse were fined 10¢ for each offense; drills and marching practices were scheduled; and George Marzolf and Mr. Phillips were instructed to build something in the shape of a sled to haul the pump in case of snow. The first alarm answered was to a fire at the home of Charles Hyman, and so states the records, "the company gave a good account of themselves."

Beginning in September 1914, it was decided to construct upwards of three reservoirs about the village as fire protection. Funds were solicited for a downtown reservoir. Apparently it was the fall of the year, three years later, before one was completed between the parochial school and the parsonage of St. Mary's Church. Meanwhile, a whistle on the Strykersville Creamery was readied as an alarm, and Feb. 9, 1917, the company purchased for \$300 an American LaFrance engine No. 10.

Talk had begun that a fire hall should be erected and early in December, 1918, it was voted to purchase a lot from Frank Brass for \$100. Six days later the Strykersville Evaporator works burned to the ground after the company had been summoned at 3:00 A. M. The surrounding buildings were held safe, but the evaporator was beyond help. Throughout 1919, the department resolved to construct a hall, but the issue was not resolved. On August 11, 1920, the Wyoming County Volunteer Firemen's Association held its annual convention in the village. The ladies auxiliary, known as the "Helping Hand Society," raised funds to purchase land for the fire hall. Finally, in 1921, a purchase was negotiated from Mr. Brass, and work began with volunteer labor, July 9th. Later these donors were compensated up to 50% of the usual wage scale, and during 1924-25, the upstairs meeting room was completed. On Dec. 8, 1925, the department purchased for \$5,100 a pumper and chassis, and the hall was wired for electricity the following year.

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

Today, the Department consists of two high pressure pumpers and an ambulance equipped with an inhalator and respirator, the later handled by an emergency squad of the 75-man company. A portable generator is in readiness. The fire district covers all of the town of Java west of the Cattaraugus Road, the village of Strykersville, and in Sheldon township south of Ambrust Road and area west of Frink's Corners, to the Erie County line on Route 78, and west into the Town of Holland. At two A. M. one day in 1949, the Phillip's blacksmith shop beside the Fire Hall burned and in turn set the hall aflame. Only by sheer luck was the equipment saved and the damage to the hall limited to \$2,500. Besides the Kihm Evaporator fire, above mentioned, the destruction of Hyman's feed mill in the village rates as a major conflagration since the formation of the department. A call was answered at the time of St. Patrick's Church fire in 1923 at Java Center and to numerous farm fires in the vicinity.

Congregational Church of Strykersville

Organized on the 3rd day of October, 1825, the Second Church of Christ of Sheldon became known in later years as the Strykersville Congregational Church. The society came into being at the request of members of the Sheldon First Church, at Humphrey's Hollow, who were resident in the southwest part of the township and desired a house of worship more conveniently located to their homes. The Presbytery of Geneva granted its consent and the Rev. Hugh Wallis was named as commissioner to organize the new church, if thought expedient to do so.

The Rev. Wallis found that circumstances were such that a new church should be formed with the following as constituent members: Daniel Smith, Omri Warner, Elijah Smith, Social Rolph, Nathan Warner, Samuel Kelsey, Milo Warner, Justus Ward, Betsey Kelsey, Betsey Olds, Martha Warner, Cynthia Tim, Lucy Grover, Electa Smith, Candace Waterman, Mary Loomis and Silence Ward. These persons gave their assent to articles of faith and a church covenant and were declared to be a regular church. Milo Warner was selected as deacon and Omri Warner as clerk. The church continued to worship in the old Strykersville school house and in private home until December 30, 1835, a day when their new meeting house was dedicated and the church entered upon a series of daily meetings during which there were a considerable number added to the membership. Officially, the body was always known as "The Concord Society of Strykersville," having been so incorporated, Jan. 14, 1834.

The church had a half-century of varying success, but beginning about 1883, there was considerable informal discussion that the church be removed from Strykersville where there had been a decrease in numbers and a decline in financial support. The regular 1883 annual meeting voted to instruct the trustees to procure a court order for the sale of the society's property in Strykersville with a view of removal to Java Village. Due to protests from members in Strykersville, the matter was placed in the hands of a referee. A ruling was made that the legal trustees up to Jan. 1, 1884, were Myron Warner, R. H. Smith, and L. M. Fox and they continued as

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STRYKERSVILLE SKETCHES (cont.)

trustees into 1885 and their legally elected successors then took office. Meetings were held by opposition groups and the matter took on the complexion of a complicated legal tangle, each side claiming to be the legally constituted church. The pastor was then the Rev. William B. Mucklow.

In January 1884, the trustees posted public notice that services would be moved to Java Village the following Sabbath, and on the 20th of that month they were so held by the trustees, pastor and others on the alleged ground that they were dispossessed of their accustomed place of worship. A minority continued to sustain worship in the Strykersville Church and the membership rolls held names of persons worshipping at both places.

The matter dragged through the courts and church councils until July 20, 1886, when an Ecclesiastical Ex-parte Council was convened to advise on the dispute. The council, represented by clergymen from churches in western New York advised that the Java Village group be entitled to the records and all property peculiar to the church, as distinguished from the society. The Java group was urged to incorporate, and the parsonage and barn and lot in Strykersville, together with the Warner Legacy, be their property. The Strykersville group was to be known as the Congregational Church in Strykersville and they were to retain the meeting house and lot. It was further recommended that all suits be withdrawn and that Christian charity be extended to all factions in the strife. The council did not sanction some of the methods taken by the minority to achieve their rights. Necessary enabling legislation to carry out the recommendations was signed by the Governor more than a year later. It is said that the parsonage burned. The Java Village Congregational Church was formally separated from the parent group, January 20, 1884.

Following the division of the church, membership in the old church averaged about fifty. In January 1888, the Concord Society approved the transfer to the Java Village group of the parsonage, lot and the legacy. Five years later, Jan. 9, 1893, a new constitution was adopted. For some years there was irregular preaching. The church sheds were used by communicants of nearby St. Mary's and apparently by the public, as the records show concern over their care. During the 1898-1900 period, repairs were made to the interior, the old organ sold, and new one purchased for \$100. The Rev. Edward Roberts, pastor of the Curriers and Java Village churches supplied for several seasons. The last meeting of records came January 20, 1906, a time when around thirty-three were on the church roll.

Gradually, we are informed, the congregational body was dissolved as members died or removed from the community. Services were no longer held and the sheds were rented for storage. Upon petition to the courts and by a special act of the Legislature, the trustees, B. M. Balcom, G. W. Sheering, and Howard B. Bennion, arranged a public sale, May 15, 1914, of the church edifice and grounds together with the personal property consisting of an organ, chandeliers, lamps, and stoves. The building was sold, demolished, and the site today on the west side of Main Street is the residence of Joseph Herrman. The proceeds of the sale were placed in a trust fund for the use of the Strykersville Cemetery. Thus, in its 90th year ended the career of the Concord Society of Sheldon.