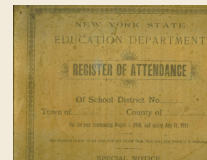




Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum
3859 Main St.
Strykersville, NY 14145

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 August issue. We are open for visitors each Tuesday afternoon from 1:00-4:00, until October. Our next meetings are August 21, September 18 and October 16 at the Schoolhouse Museum, 7:00pm. All are welcome.

The summers fly by so fast. Here it is time already for the Wyoming County Fair!



Wyoming County Fair - A Timeless Tradition

August 9 - 16, 2025

The Wyoming County Fair is held at the Fairgrounds in Pike, New York and includes many daily activities. These include exhibits, rides, horse shows, home arts, flowers, farm animals, vendors, great food and so much more! There is no admission charge to the Fairgrounds, only a parking charge at Fair operated parking lots which supports the Fair operations and prizes.

Members of the Sheldon Historical Society will be at the Fair on Monday, August 11, to assist at the booth of the Wyo. Co. Federation of Historical Societies in the Rural Museum and the Historic Griffith House. Each day, representatives from various historical societies will be there to show their historical displays. This year we will have a special scavenger hunt with prizes!

In Memory of Paul Rambino

By Jeanne Mest

The phone rang in many Sheldon homes on the morning of May 16, with the sad news that Paul Rambino had suddenly passed away. He had been ill and we were missing him at our May meeting the night before, not knowing this fun-loving guy with the personality you just had to love, had already left us for a better place. We never got a chance to tell him what a blessing he was to so many lives. Always cheerful, he loved people and was willing to help with whatever anyone needed. Paul brightened the room wherever he went, making us laugh, with his crazy glasses and his ready wit. His smile was infectious; his contributions to the community were immeasurable. Paul was proud to serve with the Lions Club, the American Legion and especially with the Sheldon Historical Society. The SAL (Sons of the American Legion) put on a ceremony on June 16, and members, family and friends joined together to remember him and say goodbye. He is greatly missed.



Caring for the Revolutionary War Monument was important to Paul.



Paul Rambino
January 14, 1966 to
May 15, 2025

Heroes of Today

By Jeanne Mest

Often I find myself using the word “heroes” while admiring Veterans, especially those of the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 or the Civil War. Then it occurred to me that I am actually surrounded by heroes every day. I am thankful to God for all my blessings, especially my family and my very patient husband, who are my first heroes. Then when I head to the Schoolhouse Museum, there they are, more heroes of today. Like **PJ Almeter**, who at 86 isn’t afraid to climb a hill with his chainsaw and trim brush for an old cemetery. Or how about the time he burrowed his way through the brush to photograph the old brewery cellar! Then there’s **Ed Logel**, who gets a call when Barb and I need help, like the time we couldn’t get the door open so he came and took it off the hinges. Another patient man; it was dinner time and I’m sure he was hungry. **Ed and Barb** are two of just a few charter members of our historical society who are still working after almost 50 years to keep our museum going. **Betty & Frank Reisdorf** also fall into that category. Countless times I’ve called Betty for help. Just recently I was reading through some notes she left about the schoolroom and how to put on a great day for the visiting children and the other day she helped me find exactly what I needed (something I hoped for but didn’t know existed).

Judie Coffey is always there to help, whether it is a light bulb or killer bees. She and her husband Gerry got rid of those bees last summer and practically rebuilt and painted the whole side of the Schoolhouse. This spring, **Steve and Laury Lakas** stained all the wood and got it ready for the carpenter, Justin Schwab, to finish the porch. It looks beautiful.

And then there’s the bell. I’m told that **Mary Ann Bartz** used to climb up into the belfry to repair it. Not to be outdone, **Paul Rambino** climbed up there, brought the bell down and painted it, repaired the wood and put it all back up, making it safe to ring for the next 50 years! People behind the scenes like **Doris and Donna Kirsch** have kept track of our memberships and printed the labels, for years. We wouldn’t have a newsletter if it weren’t for the vision of **Mary Ann Metzger** and her gift of creative writing. **Donna K. and Marian Lefort** provide the beautiful flower bed in front of our museum. I could go all around the room at any meeting and point out all the heroes there, young and old.

Lately we have had some wonderful newer members with fresh ideas who are so willing to help out. We have a lot of fun, too.

I appreciate each and every one of you so much. I’m sorry if I left anyone out; I didn’t plan to write this, it just came from the heart. Thank you.

The bell had the date on it.
1875
C.S. Bell Co., Hillsborough



Summer at the Sheldon Schoolhouse starts off with our Strykersville Townwide Yard Sale, always on the first weekend of June, and is followed by an exciting variety of visitors to our Schoolhouse Museum. We hear from new and old friends; some who have been researching and corresponding with us for years before finally making it to Sheldon. Such was the case with Nancy Gilbride Casey, who came all the way from Texas to see us in early July. We enjoyed her blog post about her visit so much, she agreed to share it with us for our newsletter.

Nancy has been exploring her family roots since the early 2000s. Her writing has also been featured in genealogical publications in Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Ontario, Canada. She is a member of the National Genealogical Society, Texas State Genealogical Society (TxSGS), Denton County (TX) Genealogical Society (DCGS), and several local societies in her research localities. Nancy edits her society's publication DCGS News; writes a monthly post for the Denton County Public Library's genealogy and local history blog; and is a contributing editor and author for the Texas State Genealogical Society's quarterly Stirpes. A Cleveland native, she loves to research her Wyoming County ancestors including the Becker, Schiltz, and Cailteux families. She began her family history blog [Leaves on the Tree](#) in 2018 to document discoveries and share stories. She lives in Tioga, Texas, with her husband. Reach her at ngcintx@gmail.com.



A beautiful day and a bountiful corn crop in Sheldon, Wyoming County, New York.

GREETINGS FROM SHELDON, NEW YORK: VISITING THE HOMES OF MY ANCESTORS

By Nancy Gilbride Casey

The scenery in Wyoming County in western New York reminds me much of my native Northern Ohio, especially inland from the shore of Lake Erie. This part of New York is all rolling hills, thick with trees. On my early morning drive in July, the bluish haze hung like a curtain in the valleys. Gambrel-roofed barns and tall, silver-topped silos periodically dotted the landscape. Queen Anne's lace, pale blue-purple chicory, purple loosestrife, and white sweet clover hugged the roadside.

I try to imagine what this land must have looked like to our ancestors some 180 years ago - well before modern roads, stop signs, and traffic circles. I note that the crops are planted right up to the edge of the surrounding forest as it might have been back then. I notice that corn is a major crop in

this part of Wyoming County. The adage "knee high by the 4th of July" came to mind and by that standard this year's crop is looking good.

I wonder how long it took each settler to clear enough trees from the land to plant even the smallest plot to support his own family. A local historian told me that in those days a single tree might be so large that four men linking hands could not get their arms around it. Imagine trying to chop down even one such tree. Imagine chopping down the many trees necessary to clear your plot of land. Daunting.

I am surprised by how many signs for maple goods popped up along my route; this is a great place to tap maple syrup as well. My new friend from the Wyoming County Historian's Office told me about how her father used to harvest maple syrup just for fun—while our ancestors did it out of necessity for their sugar needs.

The first lesson I learned on my trip to Wyoming County, the home of my Joseph Becker, Peter Schiltz, and Anne Marie Cailteux families, was to correct my assumptions. Or rather, correct the picture I had created in my mind while researching these families. I always pictured Sheldon as being a small town with a few buildings and a central square, typical of what I find in Texas. In reality, Sheldon is one of many small towns in the region. It does not have a town center per se, but seems anchored today on its main feature, St. Cecilia Catholic Church. The church is surrounded by rich farmland, no doubt a feature which drew our ancestors to this place all those years ago.

St. Cecilia's first iteration was a wooden church built in 1839 and located down the road a short way from the current church, near to where the St. Cecilia Cemetery South is nestled behind large pine trees. A second, wood frame church preceded the current St. Cecilia Church built of stone in 1889—long after most of my Becker, Schiltz, and Cailteux family members had moved on to St. Catharines, Ontario. Still, it was good to step inside the church where later generations and collateral families in these lines worshiped.

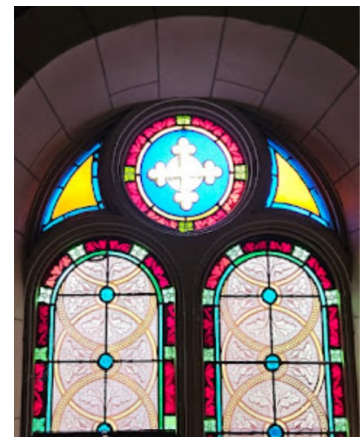
One feature of the church I wanted to see was the table that St. John Neumann reportedly said Mass on during the church's earliest days. Neumann was instrumental in bringing the Catholic church to Sheldon, visiting as a missionary priest. For all its historical connection, the humble table occupies an unassuming back corner of the church; a simple white cloth covers the table and a sculpture of the Last Supper rests there. Could it be that my family received communion from the hand of this saint from this very table?



St. Cecilia's Church, Sheldon, NY



St. John Neumann table in St. Cecilia's



(Continued on next page)

As always, I scanned for family connections as I looked around the church. While I did not find any family names on the stained glass windows or the plaque of the founding families of the church, I did recognize one priest whose photograph was included in the display of St. Cecilia's pastors. Rev. Chrysostom Wagner served the parish between 1862-1865. He had the sad duty to bury my second great-grandfather Peter Joseph Becker's siblings: twins Joannes and Jacob Becker, and their sister Elisabeth Becker, who all died in 1863.

I also spent time roaming the cemetery behind the church looking for the few burials that occurred before our families moved to Ontario. Though headstones existed there at one time for Joannes, Jacob, and Elisabeth Becker, they are no longer to be found; online images from 2010 showed their headstones lying on the ground and broken. No doubt they have completely disappeared by now, victims of time and weather. I had better luck finding the grave of Lucy Trauscht, a 2nd cousin, 4x removed, who died in 1953. Though her parents, Mathias Trauscht and Mary Schung Trauscht (niece of my fourth great-great-grandmother Anne Marie Cailteux) are also buried there, I could not locate their graves on a very sunny, sultry afternoon.



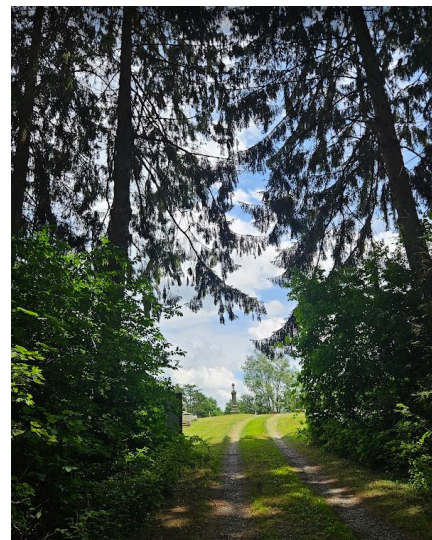
Headstone of Lucy B. Trauscht, a second cousin, 4 times removed.



Headstones in this part of the cemetery are mostly illegible. This is the rough area where Mathias and Maria Schung Traust are buried. Maria is a first cousin, 5 times removed.



Since the other church cemetery was just down the road, I drove there and turned into a lane darkened by towering trees. Emerging into a clearing I could see rows of stones, some old and some more recent. It was a peaceful setting, filled with birdsong and breezes. In my mind I could see families of the deceased coming to spend a quiet moment with their loved ones before returning home to their farms and chores, so many years ago.



Entrance to St. Cecilia Cemetery South.



St. Cecilia's South Cemetery

I also tried to locate the land our Schiltz/Cailteux family farmed. Comparing historical maps which show the farm location to a present-day Google map, the Wyoming County Historian's office staff directed me to a location north of St. Cecilia's a little way. This area, being cleared and farmed for generations, was flatter than the terrain outside of town. Bountiful fields of corn stretched as far as the eye could see.

As I left Sheldon behind and drove back to Buffalo, I reflected on the many changes that would astound our ancestors. What would they make of the towering wind turbines that now dot some fields? Or the electric lines that crisscross the landscape? How has the view changed since they plowed these fields or walked to St. Cecilia to attend Mass?

While so much has changed in the decades since they set foot here, the things that last...faith, fields, endless blue sky, and towering trees...evoke a time long past yet still comfortingly present. The memory of my family that remains here will always connect me to this place.

This article first appeared on Nancy's blog [Leaves on the Tree](#) on 23 July 2025.

Cousins Meet

I had the pleasure of meeting my third cousin, twice removed, Mary Ann Schiltz Metzger, during my time in Sheldon. I had become acquainted with her through [Wyoming County New York Genealogy](#) and [Sheldon Historical Society](#) genealogy pages on Facebook. Then we discovered we were DNA cousins as well. She and I both descend from Peter Schiltz and Anne Marie Cailteux; Mary Ann from their son Michael, and me through their daughter Barbara Schiltz who married into the Becker line. Mary Ann generously shared many notes and photos from her extensive research. Mary Ann has lived in the area all her life and it was a treat to meet someone who knew the area history so well. Thanks for sharing your time with me Mary Ann!



Nancy Gilbride Casey & Mary Ann Metzger

Special thanks to Jeanne Mest of the Sheldon Historical Society for arranging my visit on an off day; Stacey Huber and Kevin Proper of the [Wyoming County Historian's Office](#) for all the documents and historical tidbits; Carol Zittel, Sheldon town clerk, for finding two death records I needed; Barb Logel of the [Sheldon Historical Society](#) for showing me around St. Cecilia's; and PJ Almeter for digging out books to show me. You made my trip very worthwhile! P.S. Stacey, you're right. [Yummie's](#) ice cream was delicious!

FROM THE SHELDON SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM AND HISTORIAN, JEANNE MEST

First I'd like to extend a **HUGE THANK YOU** to everyone who helped or contributed to our Fund Raiser, the Strykersville Annual Town Wide Sale. We appreciated all the baskets and generous donations very much.

We have something new this year at the Schoolhouse, our very own QR Code! This can be used for everything from donations to membership dues.



We had many visitors to the Schoolhouse Museum during the Town Wide Sale, and several more since. Some current members came in person to renew their memberships, and left with a gift. Others mailed them in. Thank you.

Welcome to our new members **Matthew Rebmann, Susan Abram, Alan Kowlowitz and Nancy Gilbride Casey.**

We have several **new Lifetime Members: Sue Horst, Richard Klee, Mike & Judy Comfort and our youngest Lifetimer, Harrison Bulera, 6-month old son of Josh and Kate Meyer Bulera!**

Thank you, to all who renewed their memberships. We used to indicate the status of your membership on your newsletter label, but with our new system, the print shop mails them automatically and there is no way to show if your membership is behind. We might have to send some emails or letters, if we don't hear from someone in a long time, to make sure they are still interested. Please remember to let us know if you move or have any changes in address.

Thank you for your Generous Donations to the Sheldon Historical Society

From Donna Jacoby Reisdorf of Sioux Falls, SD

From Susan Abram in Memory of her grandmother, Mildred Johnson Fox

From Paul and Jeanne Mest in Memory of Paul Rambino

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

HISTORIAN, CONTINUED:

We have had some wonderful visitors to our Schoolhouse Museum on Tuesday afternoons. **Kevin George** brought his whole family. **Nancy Gilbride Casey** came from Texas. **Mary and Mark Laufer** came from Florida and shared some family history records with us. **Gary and Joan Ash Miles** came for a visit. **Patty and Russ Cassady** came from Flint, Michigan. **Elizabeth Love** was here from Brasstown, NC. **I can hardly wait to see who comes next!**

I am excited to share some good news with you. After extensive research and applications, the William Pomeroy Foundation has chosen us to receive two more historic roadside markers, which should arrive before fall. One is for the **Johnsonburg Cemetery**, which dates back to 1828 yet is still active today. There are four veterans from the War of 1812 interred here. There are 26 known veterans from the Civil War, 5 from World War I, 11 from World War II, as well as one from Korea and one from Vietnam.

Also chosen was **Frink's Corners Cemetery**, at the junction of Route 77 and Perry Road, where there are 3 Revolutionary War Veterans buried, along with 2 from the War of 1812. These were among the first settlers of the area of Sheldon known as Frink's Corners. The judges suggested we also apply for a special Patriot Burial sign for Frink's Cemetery as well as our Strykersville Pioneer Cemetery. Special thanks to **Mr. David Laurence Frink**, who had corresponded with us over 15 years ago and was willing to supply me with much information I could not have found elsewhere.

Another special person behind the scenes is **Scott Barvian**, who relocated from Sheldon to Arizona almost 40 years ago, but still keeps up with Sheldon's history, both in the past and the history being made today. He has been a resource for so many people in search of their Sheldon ancestors, and helps me with story ideas and getting this paper out without too many errors. Scott wrote our entire issue in October 2023, A Special Edition in Honor of St. Cecilia's 175th Anniversary.

Keep Scott in mind if you are in need of assistance with your Sheldon family history. He can be reached at scott_barvian@hotmail.com

Patricia Lefort

November 10, 1949 to June 12, 2025

Patricia Lefort, a former resident of Strykersville and East Aurora, died on Thursday, June 12, 2025. She was 75; the youngest of the three children of the late Albert and Betty Lefort.

She was an incredibly outgoing friend and family member, cherished by all who met her. She worked for multiple newspapers, including the East Aurora Advertiser and the Pennysaver. She was a woman with a strong faith and sang in the choir at St. Mary's Church in Strykersville. After retirement, Pat spent many Tuesdays volunteering at the Sheldon Schoolhouse Museum, greeting and assisting visitors, and making us laugh. She was a joy to know.

Thank you, Pat, we will miss you.



Patricia Lefort

More Member News:

Congratulations to John and Whitney Kehl Chamberlain, on the birth of their son, Chester Kehl Chamberlain. Chester is the grandson of Jason & Missy Kehl and great grandson of Marian Lefort and Carol Kehl!

We extend our sympathy to the family of Mary Agnes Barvian Conrad, who passed away July 17th. She was a daughter of the late Otto and Bernice Kriger Barvian and was often known as the Popcorn Lady, as she sold popcorn at her home for many years. Mary was an aunt of Scott Barvian, who contributes regularly to our newsletter.

WYOMING COUNTY FEDERATION OF HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

By Jeanne Mest

Since Sheldon continues to be in charge of the Federation, we scheduled our June meeting for Tuesday, July 24 at 6:00pm. We had a great turnout that included our new County Historian, Kevin Proper, and representatives from almost all of the towns in our county. We discussed the Wyoming County Fair in Pike, NY, where the Federation has a booth in the building with the old farm equipment.

We have set a date for our annual Fall Federation Luncheon Meeting, which will be held on Saturday, October 18th at Attica's 10th Hole & Golf Course, 95 Bunnell St., Attica. Our guest speaker will be Mark Herman. More details to follow.

Save the date!

STRYKERSVILLE PIONEER CEMETERY UPDATE

We are so happy to report that the problem of dangerous trees has been taken care of by our town councilman, James Fontaine. Thank you, Jim, for cutting down and removing the dead and damaged trees that were making our cemetery unsafe. Now we can get back to the business of repairing tombstones, discovering unknown graves and making our pioneer cemetery a beautiful and pleasant place to visit and reflect on the lives and sacrifices of our town founders, including veterans of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Thanks to the generous donations and support from our memberships, we were able to award three scholarships of \$500 each to a graduating senior in the Holland, Pioneer and Attica School Districts.

Our winners this year were: Allison Koch, Attica, Charles Kolasny, Pioneer and Ava Yox, Holland.

Sheldon Historical Society \$250 Scholarship Winners:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ATTICA</u>	<u>PIONEER</u>	<u>HOLLAND</u>
2016	James Zittel	Zachary Stewart	Trevor Perry
2017	Emily Bonner	Anna Brouse	Jessica Perry
2018	Amanda Conrad	Hannah Mogavero	Jacob Speyer
2019	Seth Kirsch	Morgan Sherlock	Alexandria Speyer
2020	Alyssa Wright	Thomas Kolasny	Madelyn Tavernier
2021	Alexis Dimick	Ty Zepp	No applicants

History Award of \$125 also given to Elizabeth Hirsekorn, Attica & McGuire Insley, Pioneer

Scholarship Award Amount increased to \$500

2022	Margot Sovocool	Merissa Dziekonski	Ava Linder
2023	Jenison Wright	Joshua Chitty	Ella Szucs
2024	Claire Zehler	McKenzie Marcheson	Lilah Linder
2025	Allison Koch	Charles Kolasny	Ava Yox

SYLVESTER METZGER'S RECORD BOOK

BY JEANNE MEST



Sylvester Metzger

In our Schoolhouse Museum collection, we have many family histories, businesses, stories & church records. Most are connected to a specific family or organization. But there is one record book in which the owner did business with people throughout the town, regardless of their occupation, where they lived, what church they attended; the customer always received the same kind of service, because they had the same needs. The book belonged to **Sylvester Metzger**, the undertaker. The records we have from his embalming book range from 1899 to 1919. As far as we can tell, if he started his business in 1899, he was a young man, age 27. He was a school teacher and music teacher. He owned and operated a General Store (where he kept the caskets upstairs) at the corner of Bartz and Centerline Road, until he sold it to **Harmon & Almeter** in 1899. Though it sounds morbid, these records can answer a lot of questions for a genealogist. They state the exact age of the person, what they died from, what church and where the plot is located.

The price for a funeral ranged from \$35 to \$50, with an extra \$5 for embalming. According to google, \$1 in 1900 would equal \$30 today, making a \$50 funeral equal to \$1500 today. If this is true, it is hard to imagine how most people could afford this. Perhaps they paid over time, or possibly it was a luxury. Otherwise people must have made their own coffins, had their wakes at home and delivered them to the cemetery.

One man fell out of a tree. Another had a barn collapse on him. The most heartbreaking was the entry for Mildred Agnes Metzger, age 4; his own daughter, with bronchitis and pneumonia. Heart disease, tuberculosis and breathing related illnesses seemed to be the most common cause of death. One person died at the German Deaconess Hospital. Looking for a pattern, I didn't see one, except on the last page. Three people in 1919 died from Spanish Influenza. Then the record ends, and someone else added a little information on a few years later. Sylvester Metzger had died on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 1919, at age 47, leaving his wife and six children.

56	1909	
Apr 2/09	Doratha Shant	aged 93 yrs
" 5/09		Oedema of Lungs
Mar 30/09	John Batto	aged 73
Apr 1/09		Pneumonia
		Contributory Cardiac Lesion
Apr 5/09	Paul Eugene Martin	aged 5 mo 4 days
7/09		Gastro Intestinal Catarrh
June 4/09	Mary Murphy	aged 69
" 7/09		Pulmonary Tuberculosis
	Java Centric Cemetery	
Oct 8/09	Angeline Gehl	aged 83
" 11/09		Chronic Colitis
		Living from 3/30/00
Nov 13/09	Nicholas Shilt	age 72
" 17/09		Valvular Cardiac Lesion
	Born July 15-1837	



Mildred Agnes Metzger, age 4

BUSINESSES IN SHELDON



SHELDON.

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

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

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

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

S. G. METZGER,
Undertaker and Licensed Embalmer.
SHELDON, N. Y.

All calls promptly attended day or night.

Mr. Metzger was born February 29th, 1872. He was educated at Canisius College, Buffalo, New York, and in 1894 he became a teacher at St. Cecilia School and organist in St. Cecilia Church. He married Miss Mary Armbrust, October 29th, 1895. She was born November 27th, 1871. In 1899 Mr. Metzger purchased the Undertaking business of Mrs. Clara Bower, in which profession he is giving general satisfaction to the citizens of the village. "Highland Cottage" is the name Mr. Metzger has given his village home.

CASH REGISTER POWERED BY MARBLES!

This is believed to be a Waddell "Simplex" Marble cash register from the late 1800s, invented by J.H. Schnarrenberger.

Clay marbles are inserted to record the dollar and cents amounts. At the end of the day, the labyrinth of tracks where the marble collected would be tallied and hopefully the total would match the money collected.

This register was used by Sylvester Metzger at his General Store. The store later became Harman & Almeter.

Donated for display by Mike & Elaine Almeter

When Mike Almeter brought in this unusual cash register for "Show & Tell", we were all stumped as to how this could possibly work. We even consulted Miss Mary Jane Almeter, whose father had purchased it from Sylvester Metzger and used it in the Harmon and Almeter Store. She said it was way before her time. Laury Lakas researched and figured it out. It inspired Laury to create a new display of Businesses in Sheldon. It still works, after all these years! Come and see it and she will show you how!

*This I Remember***Dr. McQuilkin**

Written by Norma Donnelly

In the early part of a cold January in 1911, Pa developed a severe cold, which soon turned into pneumonia – a dread disease at that time. He would be 39 in July. His brother, Charles, had died of pneumonia in North Java at the age of 40, so great apprehension was felt.

At that time the patient had to be cared for at home. How fortunate we were to have Dr. McQuilkin in town – a dedicated you man of 31. He had come to Varysburg in 1906 fresh out of medical school and as all young doctors then he had a hard time making ends meet but he never charged very much. Many times he came twice a day as you can see by the bill kept these long years. He was a friend as well as Doctor. I can't imagine anyone of today thinking they could care for a patient at home with so few of what we call the necessities of life today.

Raymond was living with Father Gibbons at Attica that year. Annabel, 5 years old, was taken over to Aunt Katie's at Gainesville. Genevieve, just 3, went up to Aunt Ellen's at North Java. Florence Schwab told me of the care Aunt Frances took of her when Aunt Ellen was on a maternity case. I – because I was in second grade at school – stayed down at the hotel run by Thomas Murphy, mother's bother. So that left just Charles and Louis, 9, and the baby, Elizabeth, about 8 months old at home. Of course Mother was nursing her. Charles and Louis were of great help getting water, splitting wood, carrying in the coal, and running errands; also they had to go to school.

There are many things I remember and I was told.

The people in the town were extremely good. The men took turns nights sitting up with Pa when he was very bad and they were waiting for the "crisis" – so you see sitting up with a sick friend isn't just a joke. I can remember the women making extra nightshirts. One woman, Mrs. Barbara Nest, Ella Carrishe's mother – a Protestant by the way – baked a batch of bread every week and sent it down. You couldn't buy bread in the store then. Other women sent in baked goods. I suppose men who owed Pa for horse shoeing paid it or if they didn't have the money brought wood or potatoes and such.

Finally he got so bad the Doctor decided he would have to have a trained nurse so one came from Buffalo on the train. Her name was Miss Quinlan; her wages \$25 a week. I do not know who paid them – maybe Uncle Henry Donnelly from Arcade. Mother liked her so much and the nurse said she never enjoyed being on a case as much – in spite of the fact that compared to a hospital in the city it was primitive there. Eventually she respected and liked Dr. McQuilkin and it was mutual. She and mother also had great visits when there was time.

I remember one night when I was at Aunt Mame's at the hotel – someone came in and said "Ed Donnelly was dead." But he wasn't, as we well know now.

Another thing I remember is no one had thought of squeezing orange juice. I can see him chewing the sections of the orange to get the juice and spitting out the pulp.

Funny isn't it the little things that stick in one's memory?

He was sick for about three months but gradually recovered his strength and went back to work. The girls came home. Genevieve didn't know mother when she went after her and clung to Aunt Ellen. Annabel was all dressed up in a pretty new dress when they brought her home. So once again, we were all together to work out our destiny.

I often wonder what our lives would have been if God had seen fit to take him. But he was left; he worked hard; he did his best and died in his own home with all his children around him.

Varysburg, N. Y.
Oct 9, 1912

Mr Edward Donnelly,
Varysburg, N. Y.

To, S. A. McQuilkin M.D., Dr.

May 19	Confinement (Eugene)	\$ 0.00
June 12	Visit, Delft	1.00
" 13	"	1.00
" 14	"	1.00
" 15	"	1.00
" 16	"	2.00
" 17	"	2.00
" 18	"	2.00
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A HARRIS CORNERS MYSTERY: WHO WAS MATTY MADISON?

BY JEANNE MEST

Harris Corners is the junction of Route 20A, Folsomdale Road, and Dutch Hollow Road. This small hamlet was named after pioneers Joel and Betsy Harris, who later continued westward. Although Harris Corners has never had a school or church, many businesses have come and gone over the years. Today, a new enterprise—the Farmcraft Brewery—is bringing fresh life and energy to this otherwise quiet area.

It's hard to imagine now, but there were once two gas stations on opposite sides of Big Tree Road, along with small stores, restaurants, and inns. Most were gone by the 1970's. By the time I moved here in 1975, only the two taverns remained. Just east of the Corners stood the Sportsman's Hotel, formerly known as Dorsheid's, a lively establishment known for its dance hall and bowling alleys.

Richard and Elsie Graff later purchased the building and renamed it the Sportsman's Hotel. In the 1960s and '70s, it became home to the Harris Corners Shooting Club, where trap-shooting leagues gathered for competitions. Each season concluded with a hearty steak dinner and a slice of Elsie's famous fruit cheesecake. The hotel even became a favorite hangout for some of the early Buffalo Bills players.

On the north corner was Edith's Tea Room, a beloved local restaurant. Julius Metzger once ran a store there, and after Edith's, the place became the Captain's Chair, where Bruce Edwards was known for serving the best fish fries in town. Both the Sportsman's Hotel and the Chair were popular gathering places, especially for neighbors who enjoyed playing euchre.

On the southeast corner stood another store, operated by John Fischer, who also owned the farm on Folsomdale Road that's now the Ironwood Golf Course. He kept his milk truck parked at the store so he could make his rounds even in bad weather.

But of all the names associated with Harris Corners, one stands out in the memories of those who lived through those times—or even just heard the stories. That name is Matty Madison.

Occasionally, I come across artifacts from someone's life that spark my curiosity, and I find myself trying to piece together their story. It saddens me to think of people who had no family or descendants and are at risk of being forgotten. One such person was Matty Madison, who owned and operated the store after John Fischer and later added a gas station. His given name was Mathis Mathiesen. Between his property and the Feuz farm and cheese factory stood a house and tavern once owned by John Mest Jr. (1845-1921).



The Feuz home, the old abandoned Mest house/tavern, Matt's Gas Station.

(Continued on next page)

Mathis was born in Norway on January 7, 1894, and passed away in Sheldon on March 3, 1964. He was buried in an unmarked grave at St. John's Cemetery, beside John Mest and his daughter Nora. I found it curious that he was laid to rest next to his former neighbors. But then I realized he hadn't arrived in Sheldon until after both had passed away.

Matty was a baseball fan, and among his papers I found receipts for uniforms for the Harris Tigers Baseball Team, along with others that revealed the prices of everyday items in the 1930s. Most intriguing were the photographs and a letter sent from Norway, written in Norwegian. I had never heard anyone mention that he had family, yet among the photos was an image of a child.

It's remarkable what you can uncover through census records and a bit of research. The 1900 Norway Census shows Mathis Mathiesen living in Grimstad, Norway, with his parents, a brother, and a sister.

A ship manifest records his arrival in Boston, Massachusetts, on March 23, 1909. By the time of the 1910 U.S. Census, Mathis was living in a boarding house in Mariner Harbor, New York City, alongside other shipyard workers, employed as a ship's carpenter.

In 1912, the Staten Island marriage license index shows that he married Helen (Aagot) Gunderson, who was born in Norway in 1897 and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of five. They had a son, Gunnar, born in Norway in 1913. A passenger list from the ship *Stavangerfjord* shows an eight-year-old Gunnar traveling from his grandfather, Peder Mathiesen, in Norway to join his father, Mathis, in the U.S. Perhaps he had been visiting or living with his grandparents.

Their second son, Walter, was born in Brooklyn on April 24, 1916. At the time, Mathis, his wife Aagot, and young Walter were living in Brooklyn, and Mathis was working as a ship rigger. A record dated July 31, 1930, lists Mathis as a cook aboard the ship *Hektor*, traveling from the port of Arkhangelsk, Russia via Harstad, Norway—he is listed among the crew on a manifest of alien seamen.

The 1930 Census taken on April 15 shows Mathis, Aagot, and Walter living in Batavia, New York, where Mathis was working as a hotel manager. However, just six days later, on April 21, the Brooklyn Census lists Gunnar Mathiesen, then 17, living with his mother and stepfather, Eugene Dorroher. Gunnar was working as a clerk at the time. In 1936, he returned to Norway and married Sigrid Petterson.

Mathis and Helen divorced and Helen remarried twice after their divorce. Mathis' obituary mentions two sons, George and Gunnar, but they are the same person and somehow Walter's name was overlooked.

By the 1940 Census, Mathis was 49 years old, divorced, working as a service station attendant. Meanwhile, Walter was living



Mathis and Helen Mathiesen
and family



The Harris Tigers Ball Team
 Back — Mike Keem, ?, Leo Meyer
 Middle — Paul Meyer, Charles Meyer,
 Wally Werner, Jake Keem, John
 Barvian
 Bottom — Earl Nye, Eddie Stohr
 (manager), Moon Mullins, George
 Fischer, Don Keem, Tony Karmazyn

An excerpt from a letter Walter sent to his father, Mathis:

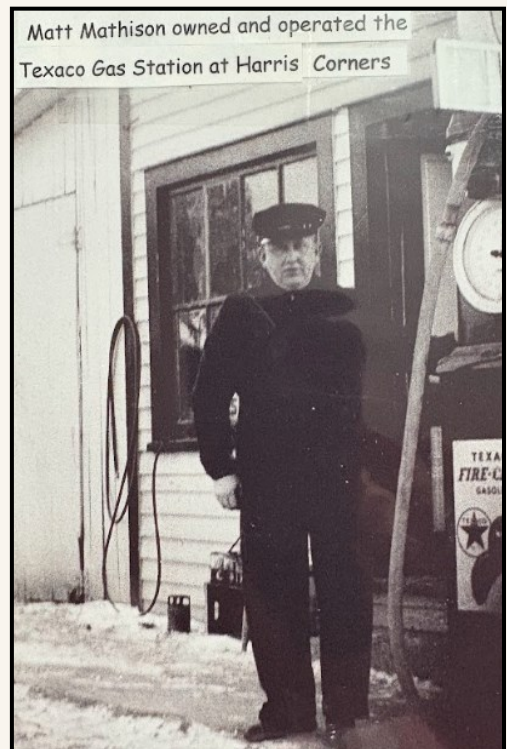
*Dear Father,
 Tonight they are sending me down to Camden, NJ. I am leaving tonight at 8 on the Pennsylvania RR Station. I am going on a new ship that's just been built. I am going on as a fireman in order to get experience, as the new engine is entirely different from any I've been on. We have got to be down there to take her on her trial run. Your son, Walter.*

with his mother and a different stepfather, Hylmar Salveson. At the start of World War II, Walter served in the Merchant Marine and later worked as a machinist in the Brooklyn Naval Yard before joining the Army. Walter later married Geraldine Daly in New York City. By the time of the 1950 Census, he was 33 years old and living in Queens with Geraldine and their two sons, George and Richard. He was employed as a stationary engineer at a city high school. Somehow, he managed to go from one side of the country to the other, since his obituary says Walter was interred at Holy Sepulchre Catholic Cemetery in Hayward, California. He was survived by his sons—George, of Fremont, California, and Richard, of Melbourne, Australia—as well as four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

I truly enjoyed learning more about the life of Matty Madison. His early career at sea may have taken him around the world, and his work as a ship's carpenter, cook, and rigger must have given him countless stories to share over the years. It seems his son Walter followed a similar path for a time as well.

I can't help but wonder what it was like for Mathis to settle in the quiet country town of Sheldon after seeing so much of the world. It's heartening to discover that he did have a wife, children, and descendants.

If anyone reading this knows more about the life of Mathis Mathiesen, I would be grateful to hear from you and help continue his story.



Matty Mathiesen

EARLY SHELDON SCHOOLS

In 2012, Annabelle Czajkowski shared this from the records of her mother, Stella Kral, who taught at School #15, the one-room schoolhouse at Royce's Corners, the intersection of Royce and Almeter Roads.

Students were given the week of October 22 off for Potato Vacation. This was a big money crop for Wyoming Co. farmers and the whole family was needed for picking up potatoes in the fields. If there was only one student at a grade level, they were either held back to work at the previous grade level or moved ahead, according to their ability. Frank Reisdorf (at another school) was one of the children who got boosted up to a higher grade because there were only two second graders. History and Geography were taught in 7th & 8th grades and Social Studies was taught in all other grades. Hygiene and Nature Study were the only branch of Science to be offered. In all these one-room schools, the children learned by listening to the older ones recite.



School 15, Royce's Corners

The very first school in Sheldon opened in 1807 in a blacksmith's shop at Turner's Settlement (Person's Corners) and the first school erected was about a half a mile west of the Settlement. As the pioneers ventured further into the forested town, they soon established schools at various corners, beginning with School # 11, at the corner of Factory Road and East Creek, where Martin Stryker had settled. Soon after, Garrett Stryker and the families who settled on Main St. in Strykersville started what became known as School #20 (which became #10) Back at Harris Corners, a little further west of Turner's Settlement, School #1 was established, but along the way it was changed to School #5 and the Johnsonburg School was made #1.

Locations of Sheldon's first schools:

- #1- In Johnsonburg on the west side of what became Route 98, across from the Methodist Episcopal Church.
 - #2 - At the corner of Centerline Road & Barber Hill.
 - #3 - At Sheldon Center (Phil Schloss's house)
 - #4 - At the 4 corners in Sheldonville, near the home of the Hennebergers
 - #5 - At Harris Corners on Big Tree Rd.(Rt. 20A) next to Kelter's.
 - #6 - At Plants Corners, junction of Bartz & Perry Rd.
 - #7 - Possibly on what became Maxon Rd., south of Rt. 20A, before Barber Hill.
 - #8 - Person's Corners, or the Settlement, 20A & 77.
 - #9 - On the north side of Humphrey's Hollow
 - #10 - The present site of the Sheldon Schoolhouse
 - #11 - Factory Road & East Creek
 - #12 - Frink's Corners (Route 77 and Perry Rd.)
 - #13 - Corner of Humphrey Hollow and Maxon Rd.
 - #14 - By St. John's Church, corner of Dutch Hollow and Centerline
 - #15 - Johnsonburg, corner Royce & Almeter Rd.
 - #16 - On School St. in Varysburg
- Other locations were Humphrey & Almeter Rd. Most of the schools are visible and marked on the maps of 1866 & 1902.

NEW YORK STATE
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

REGISTER OF ATTENDANCE

Of School District No. _____
Town of Fielden County of Livingston

For the year commencing August 1, 1910, and ending July 31, 1911

THIS REGISTER IS NOT TO BE USED FOR ANY OTHER YEAR THAN THAT FOR WHICH IT IS PREPARED

SPECIAL NOTICE

VARYSBURG

Sheldon No. 5

Elizabeth Barvian, Cecelia Fire-
stine, Marian West, Hazel Metz-
ger, Hazel Stanley, Harold Fenz,
Louise Karmazyn, Walter Kar-
mazyn, Henry James Kelter,
Charles Meyer, Irene Karmazyn,
Ira Stanley.

Marion Fenz 99, Leo Meyer 98, Cecilia Firestone 98, Edith Gowan 97, Augustus Keem 97, Raymond Zynda 97, Donald Keem 98, Margaret Barlian 95, Elizabeth Barlian 95, Charles Meyer 95, Louise West 95, Harold Fenz, 94, Louise Karmazyn 93, Hazel Stanley 92, Walter Karmazyn 92, Ira Stanley 90, William West 90, Henry James Kelver 90.

IMPORTANT—Read carefully “Directions to teachers” before making any entries. Enter ONLY boys on this page.

FIRST TERM Attendance in school district no. 14 Schoolhouse situated in the town of _____

PUPIL NO.	GRADE	Names of pupils of school age (over 5 and under 18 years)	Names of parents or guardians	Age	Insert date over each day's attendance "S"																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																													
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Sheldon Historical Society
Schoolhouse Museum
3859 Main Street, PO Box 122
Strykersville, NY 14145

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Permit No. 29

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Research assistance is available
throughout the year.

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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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Secretary - Clarence Conrad
Treasurer - Michelle Fontaine
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Judie Coffey, Steve Lakas, Missy Kehl
Museum Curator - Barbara Logel
Classroom Curator & Town of
Orangeville Historian - Laury Lakas
laurylakas@gmail.com
Sheldon Historian/Archival Curator
Newsletter Editor - Jeanne Mest
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Sheldon Historical Society Membership

Being a member of the Sheldon Historical Society means being
part of preserving history. Your dues and donations help maintain
our museum and historical artifacts and contribute to scholarships.
As a member, you may vote and receive newsletters at no cost. The
membership year is from July 1 through the following June 30.

Please renew yearly and let us know of any address changes.
If you are currently a member, we thank you for your support!

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

Name _____

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____ NEW MEMBER ____ MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

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