

Cemeteries: Not a deadly topic

Chautauqua County Historical Society

October 26, 2002

Thank you for coming. Last week I asked a member about attending today and was told, "Oh no, I don't like that topic at all." But what a perfect topic for an historical society. A Cemetery is a great place to find stories of the past.

I used to wonder why cemeteries were enclosed in elaborate fences, or thick hedges, or walls. And even in unfenced cemeteries, we find individual family plots fenced or curbed? Do you know why? A possible answer was found in a letter to the editor of the *Jamestown Journal* published August 21, 1833, one-hundred-sixty-nine years ago. The letter is signed "A Stranger," but I suspect the author may have been Dr Elial T Foote (of Foote Papers fame) who at that time was much interested in closing the Jamestown Pioneer Cemetery on Cherry Street and the developing a beautiful new cemetery at the Lake View site. He starts by praising the prosperous condition of the village, then gets to his point in the second paragraph.

"I must acknowledge, however, that my feelings were greatly shocked, when I passed your burying ground. Although I might spend my life in your neighborhood very agreeably, I should shudder at the thought that my mortal remains should inhabit your grave yard. Never do I wish my body to be disturbed by the numerous swine which infest your street in the day, and in the night take up their abode with the dead." He continues with the paragraph that gives away his identity.

"Perhaps I know what half your citizens do not; that in your village are two burying grounds. One is in a street which I understand has been lately laid out; and the other— the present place of interment, is without fence, hedge, or wall. I have on the whole come to the conclusion that your citizens contemplate but a very temporary residence in this strange habitation of the dead."

So, now we know that fences may have deterred wandering animals. But maybe fences were added to deter grave robbers. Dr Thomas Mann of Laona trained young men to the medical profession. Dr Mann realized the need of a solid foundation in anatomy—problem: how to gain that knowledge without access to that visual artifact—a cadaver? We don't know if his students were ever provided with such a tool, but we do know of one unsuccessful attempt to gain same. At the last meeting of our society, Mr Wayne Mori told us about the lives of early Mormons in Chautauqua County, including the Ezekiel Johnson family of Laona. Wayne's research turned up the tale of Elder Brackenbury who arrived in the town of Pomfret in late fall of 1831 and stayed several weeks with the Johnson family, preaching and baptizing many of the Johnsons and others into the Mormon faith. While with the Johnson's, Elder Brackenbury suffered a painful attack of something called "bilious colic" (probably a gall bladder attack) from which he suffered for a week, then died on the 7th of January 1832. He was buried in the Laona Cemetery. Dr Mann's sister, Eunice was married to William Johnson, brother of Ezekiel, so Mann had been called to attend the ailing missionary. Medical science of that day had little to offer a patient suffering from this disease since they knew so little about what was really causing the symptoms-- intense constant pain on the right side of the abdomen, vomiting, fever, restlessness and jaundice. Dr Mann saw the death of this stranger as an opportunity to learn and to teach his students. The very night of the funeral, three of Dr Mann's medical students attempted to remove Elder Brackenbury's body from its grave, but someone in the neighborhood, not sharing Dr Mann's enthusiasm for education, snitched to local authorities, and the body-snatchers were caught in the act. I wonder if they succeeded in other unpublicized attempts. The location of Brackenbury's grave was never marked, but Dr Mann himself died six years later and was buried in that same Laona cemetery where he now rests in a marked grave with several family members. His sister, Eunice's family did not join the other Johnson's in the westward migration with the Mormons. They became stalwarts of another early religious movement in our county--the Spiritualists. They and many of that group of free-thinkers

are buried at Loana. This is a good time of year to go there and read their gravestones: they weren't born, but "entered earthly life" on a given date. And at a later date, "entered spirit life." You see, we can't talk about cemeteries without bringing in all the interesting stories that rise up from them.

Genealogists love cemeteries—we get our favorite information, and some disinformation there. We have some kind of primeval need to find the final resting place of our ancestors. Directors of our own Society can verify that a significant percentage of tourism to our county is generated by genealogical research, many of these visitors come to gaze upon and photograph the grave site of ancestors. And this is why members of our genealogical society spend so much time in cemeteries recording inscriptions, and in clerks offices checking burial records, producing these books—all to help the wanderers locate those remains. We should never overlook the fact that these traveling researchers bring a lot of business into our county.

Genealogists really do plan our vacation trips to include stops in areas inhabited by uncles and cousins of an earlier generation. We become quite determined in this pursuit— traveling thousands of miles, sometimes finding nothing. Norwood and I stopped in Bond Co IL one summer to find the small, abandoned Dunkard Cemetery in Mulberry Grove Township. Three siblings of my fourth great-grandfather, were Dunkards-- members of that German sect of Brethren. They migrated west to Illinois after the Civil War. There, miles out of town on a dirt road, in grass to our armpits, we not only found tombstones of those great-aunts and uncles, but alongside these relatives of mine, was the grave of one George C. Brunson. My genealogical psychic power kicked in and I said, "He's from Chautauqua County." Norwood thought I was making it up, but I insisted on a return visit to the library where we learned that George C. was indeed born in the town of Chautauqua, son of Abel Brunson and his wife Sally Love. Futher, Sally's father was John Love, the victim in one of our county's early murder stories. The three Thayer brothers were found guilty of that murder and were hanged in 1825. I still don't know much about George's life in Illinois, or if he, his wife and son Dwight, all buried in that tiny cemetery, were members of that small Dunkard sect whose church is long gone and cemetery abandoned, but be assured that the ghosts of Chautauqua County roam far and wide.

You remember that Joseph Damon's name was mentioned by Wayne Mori at our last meeting in connection with the fifteen thousand people that reportedly gathered at Mayville in 1834 to watch Joseph be hanged for the 1833 murder of his wife. Our most noted early stone cutter was Martin Damon, who with his notorious brother, Joseph, worked their art in the 1820's and 30's in the town of Pomfret. I have seen Martin's signature on a few stones and have heard that Joseph's can also be found, but I have never spotted one with Joseph's signature.

Other local early cemetery artists were J B Stutson, working at least as early as the Damons, with several signed monuments in Forestville and Sheridan, L B Hill of Smith Mills, David Scott of Dunkirk. Later, in this part of the county, we find stones signed by Samuel Ard, Smith and Mace, and of course, Samuel Nixon or Nixon Bros, of Westfield. Ard, who worked only a few years out of Smith Mills had a distinct style, carving rather large monuments in a dark colored sandstone. Ard is my favorite among the stone-cutters because he seemed to have convinced his clients to include genealogical information on the stone. Even without a signature, one can spot Ard's work by the timber-type font he used to emboss the family surname onto the stone. Many of these can be found in the cemeteries of the town of Hanover. The Griswold stone pictured shows his signature and includes the wonderful information on Loana Griswold's maiden name and birthplace which we may never have learned except for this tombstone.

Nathaniel Smith and his son, Eugene, were early monument carvers in Jamestown. P Frederick Mace and his partner, Daniel E Smith signed many stones simply S & M, Fredonia. At the time of the 1875 census, every town in the county had a least one person who listed marble cutter as his occupation. In the spring of 1886, The *Chautauqua News* carried on a debate about the importance of marking graves. First this article appeared: Chaut News 17 Mar 1886-- *How important it is that the graves of our dead should be permanently marked; yet*

how much neglected the many nameless sites in every graveyard bears us witness. It is not always from want of respect for the dead, or from want of means or inclination. It is procrastination—delay. Let those who have been heretofore remiss, hasten to atone for their neglect. We owe it alike to the dead and the living..... How many of the illustrious dead names that are familiar to us as household words, sleep in nameless graves—their last resting place unknown—because their surviving friends neglected to mark the place with a grave stone until too late. But instead of leaving his point as taken, our editor prodded the ego of his male readers:

In this regard it is said that a woman has a better memory than a man. When a wife survives she almost always renders her last tribute of respect by a monument to her deceased husband. But man, more neglectful, is drawn away sooner by the cares of business and forgets this duty.

The importance of memorials is not the same for all. The week following the editorial, a letter to the editor appeared in the same *Chautauqua News* saying: *Let us whisper a few things in your ear. Cemeteries are filled with dead men; that is the proper place for them. Towns, villages and cities should contain live men, men of push; that is the proper place for them. They build up the community, while the former fill up the cemeteries. It is the man of push that brings trade to town, that beautifies it, that increases its productions, that holds out inducements to capitalists to locate and establish industries, that increase the population and wealth—the everything that goes to make a live town. Bury the dead to make room for the man of push.*

And this debate goes on even unto the year 2002—strong opinions about use of prime real estate for cemeteries, conflicting with reverence for the dead.

Another problem of cemeteries was and still is, the question of upkeep. The *Chautauqua News* of 2 June 1886: *We need to improve the condition of our cemetery. It is a beautiful location, has a nice lots and fine monuments..... There should be a man constantly employed during the greater part of the year to keep it in proper condition. How many of the 300 owners of lots will pay \$1 a year for this purpose? Can you do the math on that salary?*

Today, NYS law requires public cemeteries to retain and invest a percentage of the sale of lots for the purpose of future maintenance. We could do a whole program, hours long, on cemetery law. We will only state that these govern just about 40 per cent of cemeteries and there are very few cemetery police to enforce cemetery law. In his newspaper teaser, James promised that I would tell you if you can be buried in your own back yard. Yes, if you really want to be. It would become a private cemetery, not under control of “cemetery law,” but please don’t try it without the help of a licensed undertaker and don’t try it in the dead of night. Though not under state law, such burials must be done in compliance with State Health Department regulations. And remember the property may be sold by your heirs, with that same question of future maintenance.

We learned with some amusement that this problem of upkeep crosses the state line into Pennsylvania when we stopped in Bradford to find the grave site of a person we were researching though not related. The family plot had some marked graves but wanting to know who else might be buried there, we stopped at the cemetery office. The attendant was most friendly and helpful. No, she couldn’t look it up right now, but please leave in writing exactly what we were seeking, along with our name and address so she could do the research and mail us the result. The charge we inquired??—no, no charge. The information we sought was sent promptly by mail, along with a bill for \$110 of unpaid “annual maintenance” on that lot.

A major 19th century monument maker was Samuel Nixon of Westfield—grandfather of illustrious past-president, Rod Nixon. In the 1865 census, he lists his occupation as marble cutter, in 1870 as marble manufacturer, and in 1875, marble dealer. By this time, he had a large crew of stone-cutters. The personal items in local newspapers of the time let us know that he was busy erecting monuments throughout the county. Aug 4, 1886: Nixon Brothers of Westfield, have lately set fine monuments in our cemetery for Mrs Mary Peck and for Mrs S L Paddock. They have contracts for one for Stephen Cook’s family, one by Frank Button for this father, the late

Alvin Button, and one for Ambrose Balckmer's family. Oct 6, 1886: Stephen Cook & sons have just placed in Panama Cemetery a granite monument, 16 feet high. Oct 13, 1886: S F Nixon, of Westfield, was here Wednesday and made a sale to H F & R E Sheldon. Oct 20, 1886: Ava Hart has recently erected a fine granite monument in our cemetery. Nixon Bros of Westfield did the work, and the foundation is laid for two more to be put up. This all happened before Grandfather became more famous as a politician.

Then Mrs Henry H. Beaujean ordered a fine granite monument for her lot in the Sherman cemetery from the Nixon Bros. Poor Henry, on a trip to scout out the West he was killed in a RR accident in Kansas on the 24th of January 1886. This was totally the fault of the Railroad and his young wife could have collected well on behalf of herself and her young daughter, Mary, but we are told in the *News* that on June 2nd Mrs Beaujean accepted the \$5000 settlement offered by the RR. The following week we are told that she ordered the monument. But, you know what? I checked out our Sherman Cemetery book— no fine monument to Henry was found. In fact, no stone at all for anyone named Beaujean. Town records do show that Henry's body was shipped by the RR from Kansas and buried in Sherman Cemetery on January 29th, but there are no other Beaujean burials listed in the town office. Did Mrs Beaujean collect the \$5000 from the RR and move elsewhere? Did Nixon Bros actually prepare the monument for ^{her} and were stiffed for the work when she absconded?

Did you know that if you are looking for a bargain in a tombstone, you can get such a one that was ordered but never set because of lack of payment? When you visit the cemetery, look for stones that have the area of the family name, usually rectangular, ground about a quarter inch deeper into the granite. The previous name and information has been effectively "erased" and your name can now be engraved a little deeper. I learned this when the double stone for my parents was set in Forest Hill. It did not start out as one of those "bargains," was beautifully done, except that mother's name was on the left and she had been buried on the right. Well, Mother didn't complain and it did not seem to matter much to Dad, but some family members were upset, so the ~~was~~ ^{names} were erased (no charge because of the error) and changed places. About that same time a similar double stone was placed on the plot next to my parents, with the names of the couple, the husband, recently deceased, with his surviving wife's name and birthdate also engraved, just as was my Dad's who was still living. You will find this situation in every cemetery you may visit. But, just a few years later, we noticed that this wife's name had been totally removed from the stone. We don't know, but guess that her life took a positive turn and she made other plans.

As in every form of art, tombstones had a steady flow of fads and styles. Our area's earliest tombstones were thin slabs of fieldstone or marble in the "sun and moon," "willow and urn", era of the carver's art. We have a few examples of these early Chautauqua County designs on the photo sheets. Genealogists are always searching for an exact date of birth and some stones give this information. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, stones listed just the death date but added the age at death by year, month and day, making it possible to deduce a date of birth. We have a computer program that uses this information to calculate the birth date for us. (Notice this dating style on the Morrison stone #7) This stone shows a combination of the sun and willow motifs popular in the early 1800's. As you tour any cemetery, look for icons of a hand pointed heavenward, opening gates of heaven, a endless variety of crosses. You will find only one monument in the county that has torches pointed toward the ground—look at #10 on the photo sheet. We couldnt find out much about the life of Martin B. Bradley whose large monument is near the front of Forestville Pioneer, and who went to great lengths to advertise to the world his belief that at death, life was forever extinguished. No guide to Heaven or Pearly Gates on his stone. As a youngster, I remember a visit to that cemetery with my Dad and his boss, Charlie Dye, walking near the Bradley monument, hearing a reference to him as "that damned atheist." The monument tells us only that Martin B Bradley died in 1878 and his wife Fidelia Judson in 1871. The *Dunkirk Observer* informs us that Mr Bradley died in Hart, Michigan, and that a monument costing eight thousand dollars was placed on his lot in Pioneer Cemetery. That is all we know about the life of Martin B. Bradley, but yet, is that not more than we know of the lives of most as we walk by their tombstones?

When you visit the cemetery, stroll through the old section, progress through the years to the site of the new burials. Note the changes in style and wording. Note the variety of themes—how many different ways to design the drape of mourning? How many different shapes? Visit more than one cemetery and note the differences. When our granddaughter was little, she liked the Catholic cemetery where my sister is buried—so many statues of angels—she called them dolls, running from one to the next to pick out her favorite. Visit Holy Sepulcher Cemetery in Jamestown. Larger than life angels guard the gate there.

Another form that may seem all sameness and boring is the veterans' marker. Not true! Look more carefully. Quite a variety can be found and even more available to the veteran. A emblem reflective of one's belief can be chosen or left off, a marble or granite standing marker, or a bronze plaque can be chosen. The plaque can be attached to the back of a commercial monument or placed on its own at ground level. A niche-sized plaque is available for those strange little apartment structures now in most cemeteries to receive cremains. One can choose the full designation of rank and unit or only the branch of service on these veterans' markers. You may have full date of birth and death, just the years, or no dates at all. Awards, including the Purple Heart can be noted. These are ordered through your friendly neighborhood mortuary. We printed out a copy of the 32 authorized emblems of "one's belief" available—many of which I have yet to observe in Chautauqua County. Do you know that just two years ago some lawyers looked over the rules for giving out these free markers and found that it illegal to furnish a stone or plaque for a veteran who already had a commercially purchased marker? In Chautauqua County alone, were hundreds of these "illegal" markers. Around the world there were millions! To avoid the expense of removing these illegals, the law was changed last December to match the practice in place for a hundred years. Isn't government wonderfully efficient?—saved us all that money!

Yes, you can still order a marble marker from the government, but few marble markers are placed today. By the end of the nineteenth century we sadly learned that the marble, once thought indestructible, was indeed wearing away. Monument makers turned to granite that would last through eternity—or as far into it as we care to think about. That double stone for husband and wife, side by side replaced the over and under style of an earlier day—John J Smith and his wife Anna— sometimes even, "his beloved wife" Anna... We have found with dismay that some of those old stones lacked the wife's given name, let alone her maiden name. Many were buried with only Mrs for a first name. As you wander through the newer sections of any cemetery in the county, you can't miss the double stone fad of today--carved in the form of two hearts, connected by interlocking wedding bands with a message such as "together forever" with the the wedding date permanently engraved. One couple, who don't share our love of visiting cemeteries, decided it was time to preplan and chose their tombstone. They paid a premium, they claimed, to get this unique design they had thought up themselves of interlocking hearts. The next time we saw them, they were quite dejected. They had visited the newly-set stone and found at least ten similar ones in the same row.

We found one dissenter from this "together forever" mentality— A Forestville friend who, upon the death of her husband bought a single grave in Pioneer Cemetery for him and another single grave at the opposite end of town in Prospect Cemetery. "I lived with him all these years," she said, "I don't intend to spend eternity with him."

We have come to the computer age in cemetery art— Now we have engraving of the actual buildings on the farm where decedent lived and died. Occupations and hobbies are symbolized in form of deer waiting for the hunter's aim, grape vineyards, trucks, hot cars, a winning pinochle hand—you name it, it can be engraved on your tombstone. One couple, still living, had Riles and Woolley of Forestville set for them in Forest Hill cemetery a modest stone (#17) with their own unique symbols: his Lincoln Town Car and her pack of cigarettes and cup of coffee. My husband taught me to recognize the difference between engraving and etching. You can spend a little more (actually a lot more) for an etching done by an artist with a diamond stylus. You will see attached to many tombstones a photograph of the decedent. Sadly, some of these have been vandalized, the photo gone, or, if the photo remains, it is cracked or faded. Now instead of attaching your photo to the stone, it is possible to

have a very lifelike copy of your features etched directly onto the stone. I don't have a photo of one of these but Mr. Woolley says that though expensive, these are excellent in quality and he has set one in the cemetery at Randolph. Mr Frank Arnold, the last resident keeper of the Dunkirk Lighthouse, has the likeness of that lighthouse engraved on his memorial. The Wawro's, leaders of the local LDS church and library for many years, have the Salt Lake Temple etched on theirs' along with the church precept that makes this sect the world leader in genealogy- "Families are Forever." Perhaps because of longer life expectancy, cemetery art of today has turned away from symbols of grief, to celebration of life.

Phallic symbolism was prominent in the late nineteenth century. Look at the scene from Forest Hill in Fredonia honoring the publicist Charles Webster, Judge Warren Hooker, and the Howard brothers (#12 & #14). The Howard monument, it was announced in the *Fredonia Censor* in 1890, was the tallest monument in that place and cost ten thousand dollars. Other beautiful monuments in that cemetery must also have been very expensive. It seems the wealthy families of the nineteenth ^{century} competed, as each died, their families provided a more showy display than the last. We really should spend more time visiting these galleries to enjoy this art in stone. My personal favorite is #13, the elaborate Episcopal cross erected to the memory of Dr Milton M Fenner.

Many cemeteries have a unique monument carved to look like a tree stump, some with even more of the tree than one stump. We did not include a photo, but In Forest Hill, the Phillips' monument is an example. Parents names are on the stump, children of the family who died young have smaller stones that look like cuts from the trunk. The most elaborate tree carved in stone in this area is across the county line at Versailles. It's worth a fall Sunday drive to see. These were ordered at the 1893 Chicago World Fair and the company providing them was soon forced bankruptcy because they had many orders and had not calculated well the cost of production and transportation.

This weekend, for ten dollars, you can take the "Harvest Moon" tour through Forest Hill on the Fredonia Trolley. Though enjoyable, this is Halloween entertainment and will focus on ghosts and goblins. I think it more fun to save the ten dollars to go in broad daylight to enjoy this outdoor art gallery without the dramatic scary stuff. We have some flyers here, published by the Barker Museum for a self-guided walking tour. I said I would confine today to Chautauqua County, but I implore you, when you travel around the world, check out the cemeteries- unbelievable - you will find that some who lived and died in past centuries in other places had even more money to spend on monuments than our Chautauquans. As a history lesson we once took our grandchildren to visit Dred Scott's grave in North St Louis, and in the same cemetery found the family plot of General William Tecumseh Sherman, then the mausoleum of Adolphus Busch, built in 1913 at a cost of \$75,000 and on an on to others who in death seemed to try to outpace Busch. You will find such work in any major city- and don't forget nearby Forest Lawn in Buffalo.

There is one perplexing question we have encountered in our cemetery visits. Is any **body** there? Many stones, you will notice, have no death date engraved. If the birth date is within the past hundred years, we can assume, perhaps, that the event has not yet occurred. But what of many whose birth date falls well before 1900? Was there no family member or executor left to take care of this duty? Was the small charge for this service too much for the frugal or impoverished heirs, or the procrastination that worried our *Chautauqua News* editor of over a century ago? Or, did the person who set the stone in anticipation of the unavoidable, move on, or chose to be buried elsewhere. Each of these are possible, but how are we to know the facts. Patrick J O'Connell #3, announced in stone that he was the one who paid for a monument in St Mary's Cemetery in Dunkirk to honor the memory of his sister, Miss Margaret O'Connell who died in 1924 at age 83. Patrick's name and birth date is included but no death date so we are left to wonder, is he buried there? In that same cemetery are two stones to the memory of one John Maloney, on different lots, one with each of his wives. We have to guess that he is buried with his second wife who survived him, but his name, with death date engraved appears on both stones.

We worked with Walter Waligora, sexton of Prospect Road Cemetery in Forestville. He showed us the stone of a gentleman he called "Fabulous" Lawton whose wife, Marion died in 1956 but her husband's remains had not shown up to be buried beside her. I'm sure this or a similar story plays out over and over around the world, but here it piqued our curiosity to do a little search. Years before we had known Fabius (not Fabulous) Lawton and his wife, Marion Boss. Yes indeed, it turns out, the year after Marion's death, Fabe remarried and lived happily for another quarter century with his second wife. We found him buried beside number two at Hanover Center. Mr Waligora was quite disappointed when we told him the story. He had envisioned this "Fabulous" fellow, aging gracefully somewhere, waiting to return to Marion. But there will be no **body** there.

We researched the Chesbro family of photos #1 & #2. Interesting that neither Betsey, wife of Gurdon, or Lucretia, wife of Betsey & Gurdon's son James, have a death date engraved, though they were born in 1799 and 1833 and should have been long since gone. Betsey, we assumed died soon after her husband and was the victim of that male neglect mentioned in *Chautauqua News*. But Lucretia, the sister of Norwood's 2nd great-grandfather, was left a widow quite young, remarried and moved to Silver Creek. We wanted definite proof there was a body in Sheridan Cemetery where her name had been engraved. There was no evidence of burial with her second husband at Dayton where he has a marked grave beside his first wife. But, when you read old newspapers for amusement, like I do, you eventually learn all. According to the *Dunkirk Observer* for October 9, 1923 Lucretia lived into her 91st year, died at the home of her son George Chesbro and was indeed buried at Sheridan Center, but obviously no one bothered to have the date engraved. Maybe our society should write a grant with a mission to have these dates engraved after they have been proved.

In another version of the "Is any **body** there?" story, some thirty years ago, my uncle Curt and his third wife stopped at our house, grinning from ear to ear, having just completed a real estate deal. Each sold a single grave site in Forest Hill, intended for use, each with a former spouse, and traded for a double lot in the same cemetery; further, they had ordered a fine stone to be placed thereon. This couple lived happily together into their nineties. Meanwhile, they moved to Florida, where at their demise, their families decided to leave them. After uncle's death, as a sort-of funeral substitute, my cousins hosted a memorial flower-planting at the Forest Hill plot. Relatives had a fine time chatting while tamping the new floral arrangements, even said a prayer, around the stone that marked the empty graves. Each year his daughters plant new flowers and when we tend my parents graves in the same cemetery, we say "hello" to Uncle Curt in absentia. But a passing stranger may see the stone and note the lack of death date, perhaps noting that they would both be over a hundred by now, and may wonder, "Is any **body** there?"

The most annoying "is any body there" dilemma of the genealogists is the unmarked grave, lamented earlier. We are pretty sure the remains are in a certain cemetery but no stone and no record can be found. I know you have noticed, walking through any cemetery, several stones, then empty spaces. Maybe the spot was marked years ago, but the stone has since disappeared, or maybe the marker was never placed. Try to buy one of those empty spaces in an old section and you will probably be turned down because today's sextons, using power equipment, do not want to start digging into an unknown area. Is any body there? Probably, we wish we knew!

We see in Chautauqua County Cemeteries many memorials to family members buried elsewhere. In Sherman, a unique plate glass monument erected in 1886 to the memory of the Richardson family lists birthplace and date, death place and date for the male line for nine generations back to England in 1615. At least seven of those generations have no body in Sherman. But this also is worth a trip to see—a plate glass monument in near-perfect condition after 120 years.

My love of old newspapers led me to the story of Mary Robinson Lakin who died in August, 1857; her infant son died shortly after. Their two tombstones can be found in Sherman Cemetery, and the record of their burial noted in the Sherman Town Clerk's office. When we read the tombstones a few years ago, we assumed the remains of

mother and son were beneath our feet. But the good old *Chautauqua news*, Sep 28, 1887 says: Dr S A Robinson, a former resident of Sherman, now living at Staten Island, was in town Monday. His father was a Methodist minister and his sister was the first wife of Sherman's Dr Lakin. Dr Robinson had the remains of his sister and those of her child, which were buried in Sherman thirty years ago, removed to Staten Island, where they will be interred in the Moravian cemetery." So, no **body** there! We presume that Dr Lakin by that time was living happily ever after with a second wife and had no objection to this removal. But the stones remain in Sherman. Who knew?

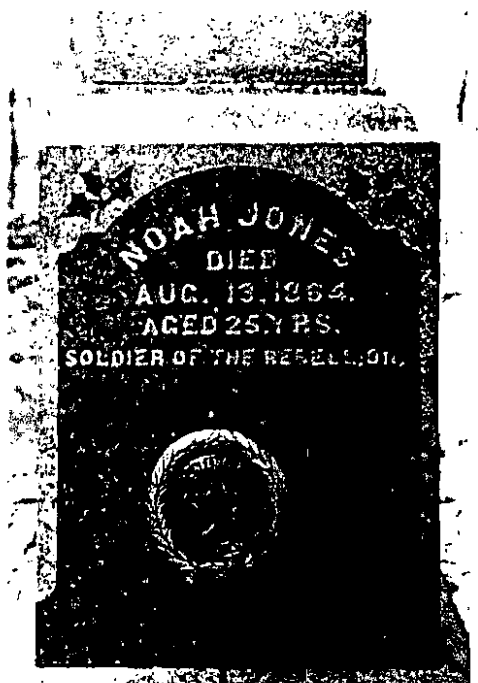
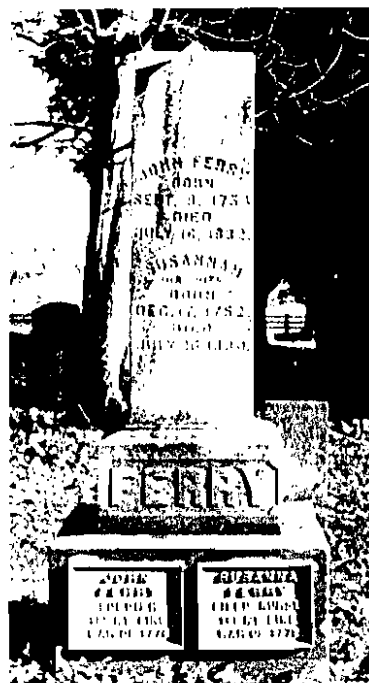
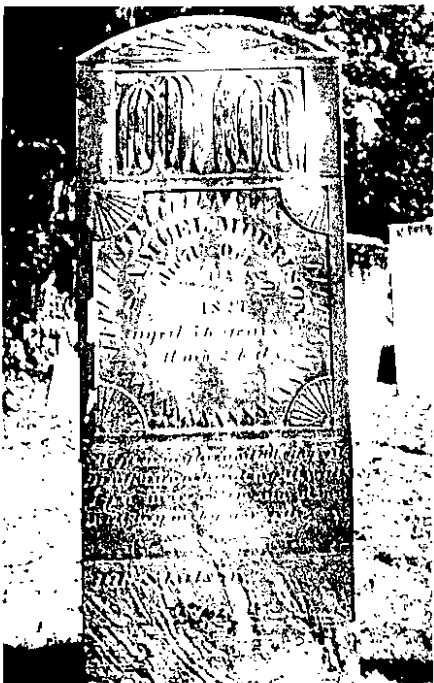
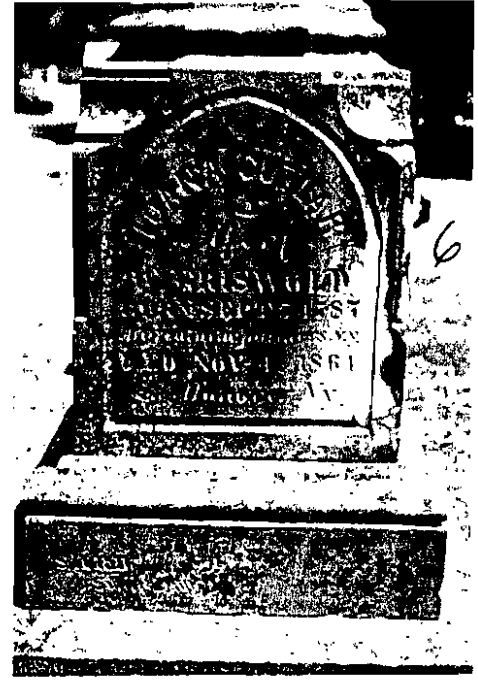
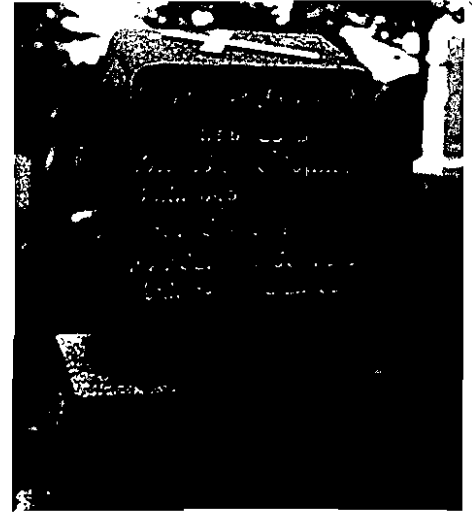
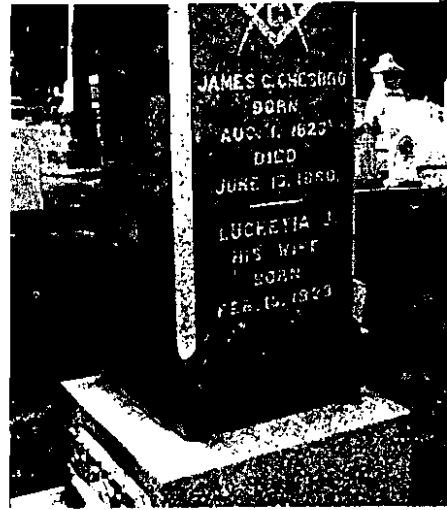
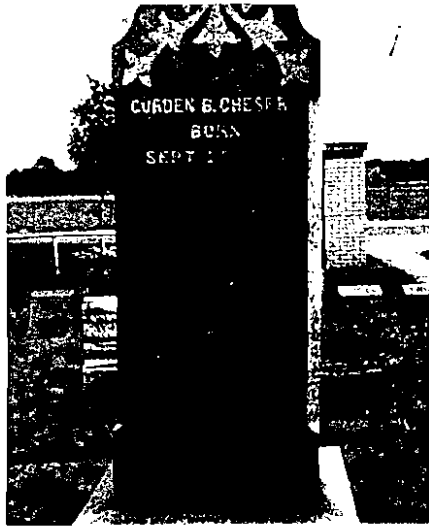
The national news keeps reminding us of the importance of these human remains and the care thereof. How often have we heard that modern buzz word, closure? Finding the remains, for some mystical reason brings closure.. Is that what drives us to know where our seventh great-grandmother was laid to rest?

We are grateful for every fragment of information we can find of persons who lived in our county, if only those two dates on a stone. Most do not have biographies in our county histories but a marked grave gives us this bit. We can get other clues from those whose space they share in the cemeteries. Bless the volunteers who are working today to preserve these memorials. Just one year ago, through the efforts of our County Historian, Michelle Henry, the Town of Chautauqua Historian, Gib Hayward, some Boy Scouts and county officials, we had a re-dedication of the cemetery at the site of the old County Home in Dewittville. There one monument memorializes over 600 persons who died at the home before 1864. After that date we find individual stones engraved only with a number to identify a thousand more who died from 1864 to 1932 when burials there ceased. We have been working to put names to those numbers and are making some progress. There is a photo of the 1864 monument on the marked page in the Alms House book. I hope the county officials remember that a year ago they promised to maintain this cemetery.

Joe Bolivard of Forestville, almost singlehandedly, has worked in cemeteries in the Town of Hanover and as far afield as Clear Creek Cemetery near Ellington to clear brush, repair and reset broken stones in cemeteries. His signature project has been to put special markers at the graves of war veterans—note the Ferry monument #8 on the photo sheet showing Bolivard's markers..

Sometimes we get disinformation, from markers. One such was our highly publicized encounter with Noah Jones whose grave was decorated for many years with a Confederate flag— a practice started innocently but erroneously by our old friend, Fred Kates. Research found the truth about Noah and he is now revered as a Union Soldier. One real Confederate Veteran is buried here in Forest Hill. Dr. Matthew Moore removed his family from South Carolina to Fredonia shortly after the Civil War. Another wonderful story that we just don't have time to tell

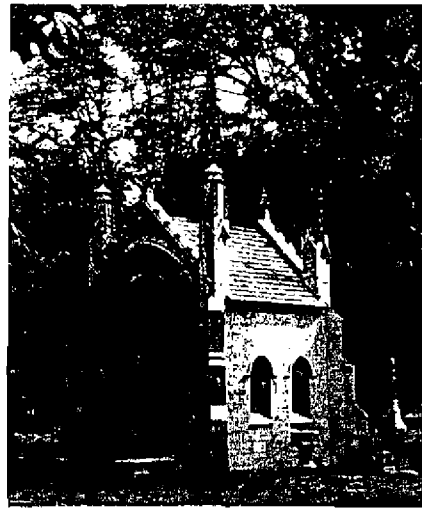
One more important change in cemeteries. Remember the Decoration Day of our childhood? Mother watched those lilac buds every spring and it was a disaster when they bloomed and died too early. In an ideal year, we would gather arm loads of the purple blossoms, and any other cut flower that could be found, along with any jar that could be used, headed to the cemetery in our model A Ford to decorate the graves. Here we were introduced to grandpa's headstone, great-grandpa's beyond the next drive and Aunt Carrie's still-born twins under the hydrangea bush. Today, it is Memorial Day we celebrate, always on a Monday, no more cut flowers because glass jars and tin cans have been outlawed. We still decorate, using money that Mother did not have, to buy geraniums, colias, verbena and spikes. As a summer Sunday ritual we make the cemetery rounds to water when necessary, as it certainly was this past season. But what about the future? I hope all of you are more fortunate, but our children live at least two states away. Those graves that Mother decorated seventy years ago and those dug since will probably go un-geraniumed. Oh please, don't let them come once every ten years and deposit one of those plastic "Mom" and "Dad" arrangements bought at the dollar store. Enjoy our cemeteries, their history, their art, and so many mysteries to be explored.



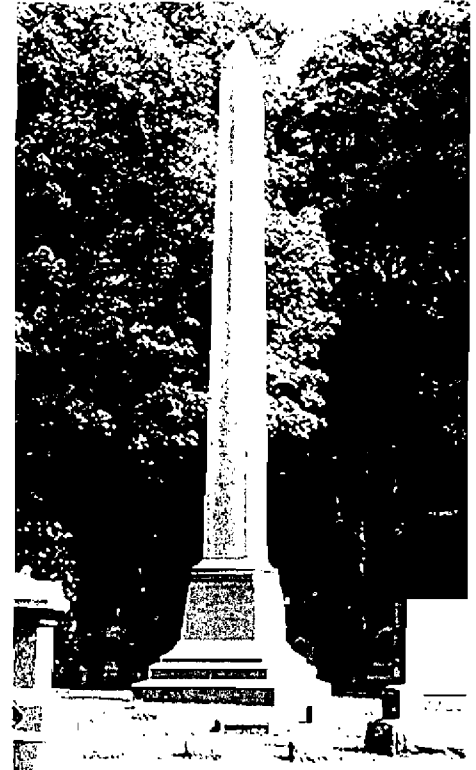
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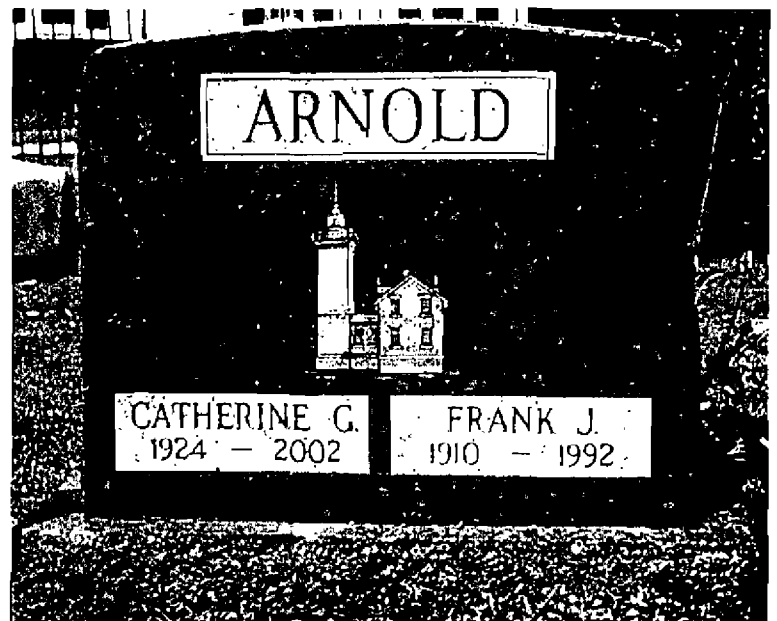
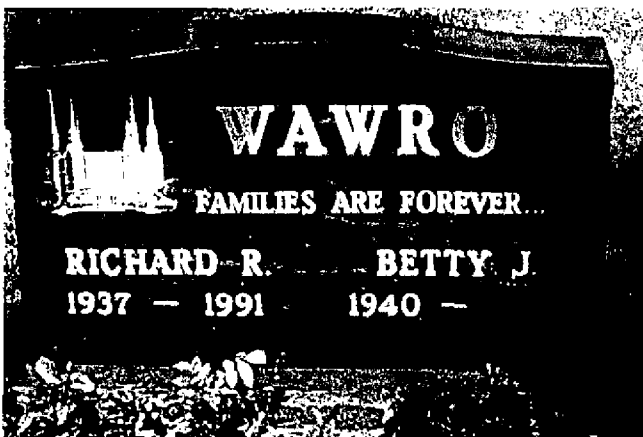
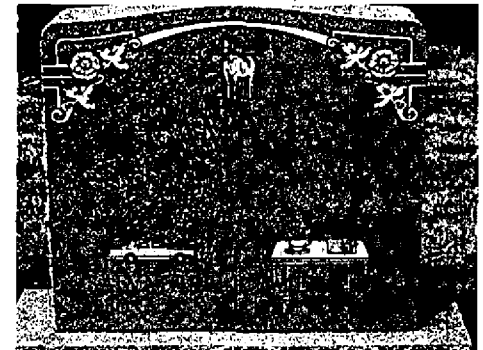
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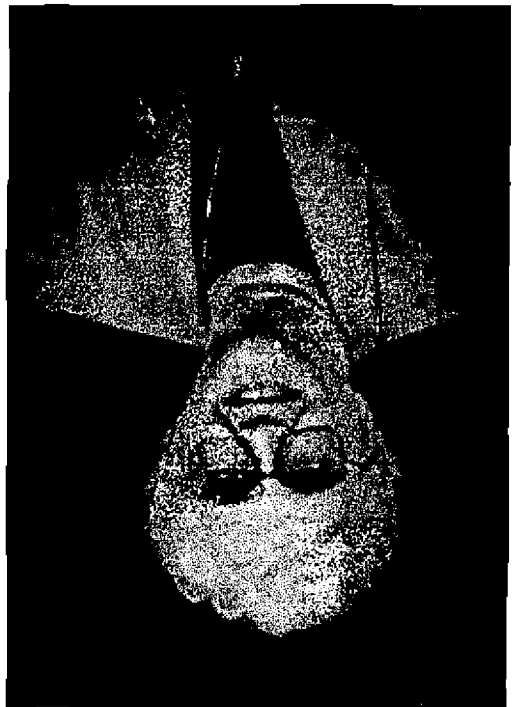
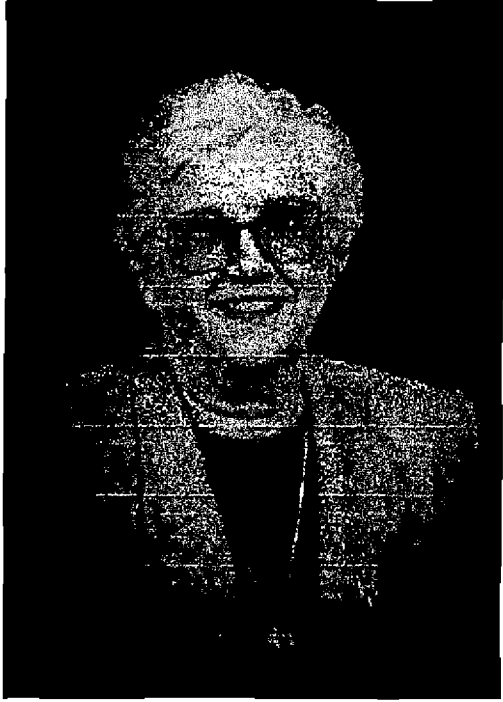


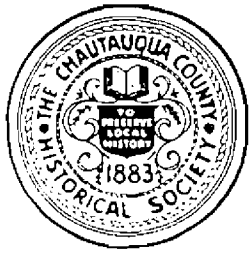
17

18

Cemetery Photos, all by Norwood J. Barris

1. Gerdon Chesbro stone; no death date for wife, Betsy. *Sheridan Center*
2. James Chesbro opposite face of above stone; no death date for Lucretia J (VanSchoonhoven)
3. Erected by Patrick O'Connell for sister, Margaret. Is Patrick buried here? *St Mary's, Dunkirk*
4. Griswold stone by S Ard of Smith Mills. *Forestville Pioneer*
5. Warren Griswold face of stone showing surname in Ard's signature timber font for surname.
6. Loana Cutler face of Griswold stone with genealogical information. S Ard signed at base
7. Samuel Morrison; ornate willow motif stone carved by J B Stutson. *Forestville Pioneer*
8. John and Susannah Ferry, both soldiers of The Revolution; Bolivard plaques on base. *Forestville*
9. Noah Jones' marker with Confederate flag holder; see story from *Chautauqua Genealogist*.
10. Bradley monument, torches point downward. *Forestville Pioneer*
11. Howard obelisk, designed to be the tallest in the cemetery. *Forest Hill, Fredonia*
12. Adolphus Busch mausoleum; small stones at right mark in-laws, Anheuser graves. *N St Louis*
13. Milton Fenner, ornate Episcopal cross. *Forest Hill, Fredonia*
14. Judge Hooker, Charles Webster; phallic symbols. *Forest Hill*
15. Frank J. Arnold, the last resident keeper of the Dunkirk Lighthouse. *Forest Hill*
16. Wawro; etching of Salt Lake Temple, genealogical creed. *Forest Hill*
17. Cambria; twenty-first century icons; stone by Riles & Woolley, Forestville. *Forest Hill*
18. Exact replica of early memorial to Col Thomas Abell. *Fredonia Pioneer*
19. Detail of above. The original stone is in the basement of Barker Museum, Fredonia.
20. Monument to memory of George L. F. Barrett, Fredonia merchant, age 24.. *Fredonia Pioneer*
21. Detail of unique capstone of Barrett monument with anchor icon.
22. Geiben monument showing occupation of decedent. Photographed at Riles & Woolley shop
23. "Fertile Flats" realistic depiction of Crandall Farm on back of monument. *Ibid.*
24. Thompson; intricate and realistic etching of farmsite with motorcycle. *Hanover Center*
25. Donovan, unique shape, beautifully etched monument. *Hanover Center*





TimeLines

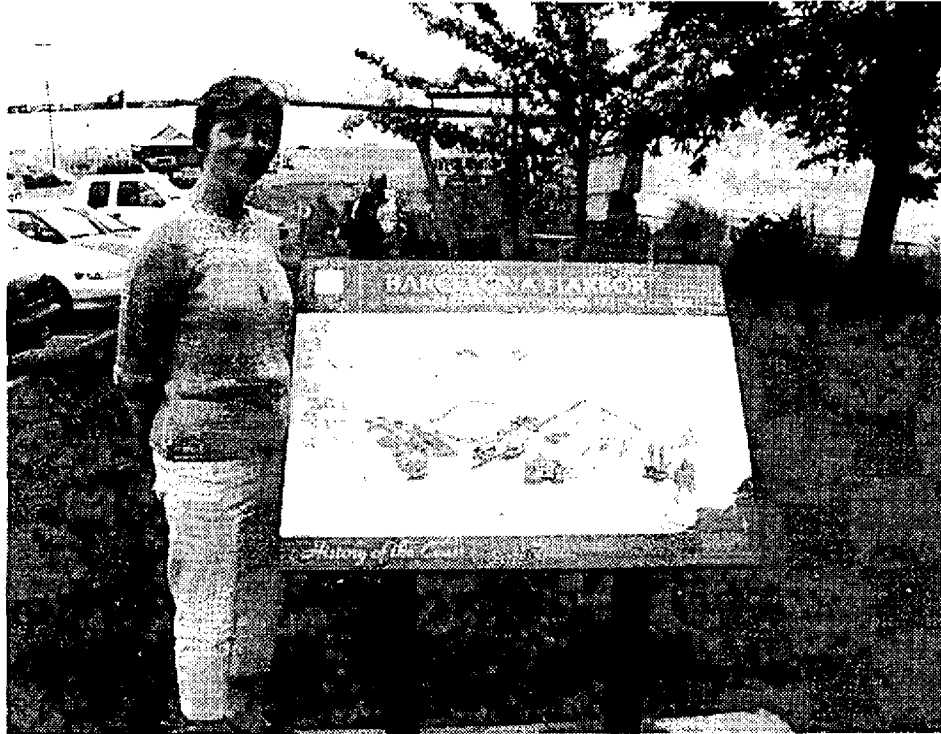
*"Good evening,
Mr. and Mrs. America,
and all the ships at sea!"*

WALTER WINCHELL
1940's Radio Broadcast Intro

Issue No. 51

A CHRONICLE OF COUNTY HISTORY

Autumn 2002



Above: Ellen Schwanekamp stands next to the historical marker at Barcelona harbor, recently installed by New York's Seaway Trail, Inc.



Teresa Mitchell, center, meets with WDC's Pam Frank, left, and Ellen Schwanekamp, right.

otherwise be missed. Located at intervals along the trail are visitor information display signs which feature regional and local maps identifying historic, cultural, recreational, agricultural and other travel information. The Seaway Trail's "Museum Without Walls" features brown and white War of 1812 signs at 42 historic sites along the way, including one at Barcelona harbor

The Seaway Trail:

New York's Only National Scenic Byway

On Friday, August 23rd, the Chautauqua County Historical Society joined the Chamber of Commerce and Westfield Development Corporation at a reception for Teresa Mitchell, the chief executive officer of Seaway Trail, Inc., which promotes New York's only National Scenic byway. The purpose of the reception was to unveil new signage installed at Barcelona harbor. Located near a kiosk displaying tourist maps and regional highlights, the sign tells the history of the harbor. According to Mitchell, "Our goal is to open visitors' eyes to the wonderful variety of attractions that exist along the byway."

Following the reception, Mitchell was given a 90 minute tour of the McClurg Museum in Westfield. Of particular interest to Mitchell was the society's textile collection, since she collects quilts. She offered several suggestions for linking the Museum with other organizations along the trail, many of which have collections similar to our own.

The Seaway Trail is a 454-mile scenic route paralleling Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. A well-marked, scenic alternative to interstate highways and toll roads, it leads the traveler to local attractions which might

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TIMELINES IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY by the Chautauqua County Historical Society. Our mission is to foster an interest in and knowledge of the history of Chautauqua County through the collection, preservation and interpretation of objects of local significance. Please address all comments to: C.C.H.S., P.O. Box 7, Westfield NY 14787.

Membership levels

Life.....	\$100.00
Family.....	25.00
Joint.....	18.00
Individual.....	10.00

Officers

- James O'Brien
President
- Pat Newell
Vice-President
- Rod Nixon
Treasurer
- Ellen Schwanekamp
Secretary
- Lois Barris
Genealogist

Trustees

- Lois Barris
- Pat Newell
- Priscilla Nixon
- Rod Nixon
- Virginia Richardson
- Henry Weiler

About the McClurg Museum

A restored frontier mansion built by James McClurg circa 1818. Today, the museum is the home of the Chautauqua County Historical Society. Open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Group tours available. Please call 326-2977 for further information.

Museum Director

James O'Brien

Assistant Director

Ellen Schwanekamp



From the Editor:

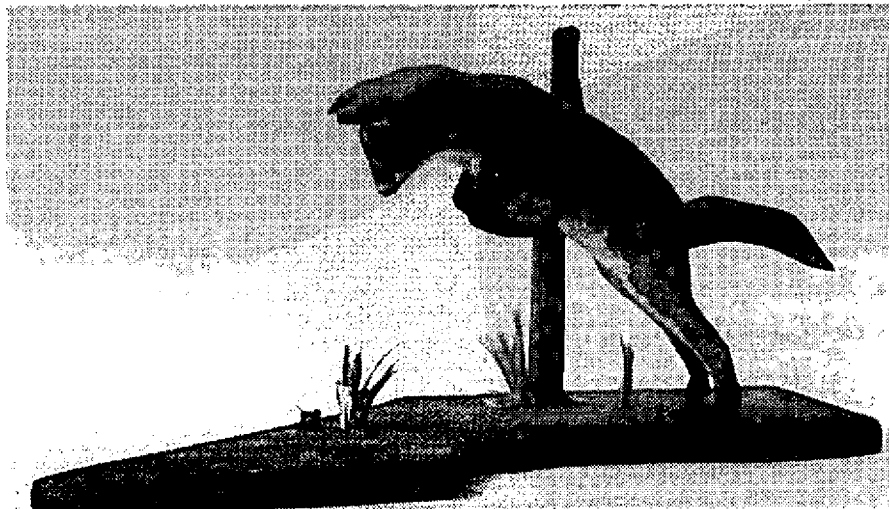
History in the Making: The Art of Donna J. Thomas

By chance I discovered a rare talent who lives among us. I was driving on the Westfield-Sherman Road one Saturday when I passed a woman sitting in her driveway, surrounded by an array of objects for sale. Curious, I turned around and stopped the car. Getting out, I immediately sensed I was in for something special. I was not disappointed. In fact, I was enthralled.

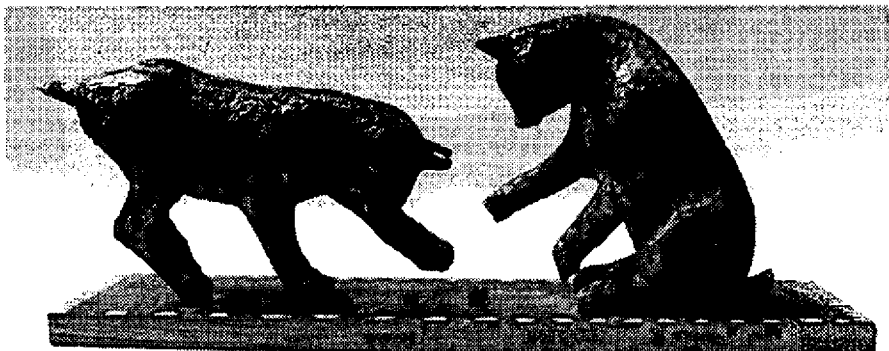
Donna Thomas is a remarkably talented sculptor who specializes in wildlife. Animals are her passion. She loves nature and her work is a perfect reflection of her interest. A lifelong resident of Chautauqua County, she is living history. Her carvings fall within the folk art genre. Without formal training as an artist, she doesn't have gallery representation, an agent, or a public relations firm. What she has is a God-given talent and a mission. She wants the viewer to know the animal kingdom, so that we might preserve it, and protect them.

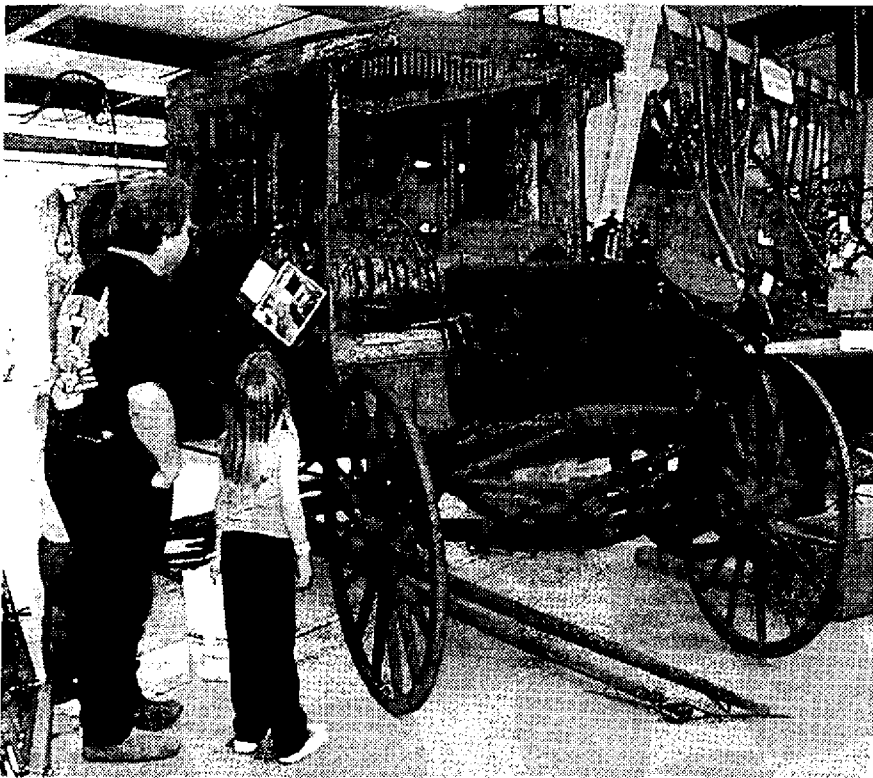
Thomas' point of reference is not only the world she sees around her, but also the world she imagines. She expresses herself through her sculpture with delightful results. Living on a farm, she is intrinsically close to nature. Her spare time is spent communicating with the animals around her. She carves their forms in wood, which she then enhances with paint. My instincts tell me that she is speaking to them and for them. But we are her audience; it's us she wishes to instruct.

No one makes Thomas create the artwork she does. I doubt anyone could make her stop. I share the following photographs with you because I believe she's remarkable. She is part of county history. This writer says, "Keep working, Donna. Teach us. Surprise us!"



Above: "Lunch," in which a fox shops for food. Below, "Bobcats" play with their food. In both cases the mouse is made from a seed husk. Clever!





Children are fascinated by history when they can experience it directly. Above: Gov. Patterson's coach, on loan to the Antique Farm Museum.

CCHS Education Committee Forms

Promoting county history is its mission

At the CCHS trustees' meeting in June, school tours of the McClurg Museum were identified as a major priority because such tours have fallen off in recent years. "The McClurg isn't alone. We've noticed a fall off at our museum, too. This is both a regional and national trend because of budget cuts within the schools," according to Chris Derby-Cuadrado, director of the Barker Museum in Fredonia. In response to the need, the society has established an education committee.

The committee is chaired by Marianne Heck, a professional teacher who lives in Westfield. Carol Crolle, who teaches at Westfield Academy, will serve as school liaison for that school. Similar liaisons are being sought for other school districts in Chautauqua County. The committee will draw upon the resources of local colleges as well as other historical societies. The committee's primary aim is to make county history relevant in a rapidly changing environment.

The committee is developing programs which encourage learning at all age levels. Its initial focus will be schools, beginning with fourth grade when local history is taught. The committee will create lesson plans for teachers to use in the classroom. These will include units of learning, resource files, hands-on activities, book lists and other materials, to facilitate the learning of county history.

In addition, the committee is developing a docents program for the McClurg Museum, to help with school tours. Docents will be trained to enter the classroom for site specific teaching engagements. Home schooling and continuing adult education will also be explored. "Learning is for all," according to Heck.

Funding has been provided by a generous grant from the Chautauqua County Bicentennial Committee, for which matching grants will be sought. To volunteer, contribute, or for more information, please call 326-2977.

Society News of Note:

Members on the move

On June 24, Mr. & Mrs. R. Nixon attended a presentation on historic preservation and economic development, sponsored by the Chautauqua County Planning Department and the Landmark Society.

On July 20, a Bicentennial Celebration open house at the McClurg Museum was attended by nearly 400 people.

23 CCHS members volunteered over a hundred hours at the 64th Annual Antique Show and Sale, held July 22-24 to benefit the McClurg Museum.

On July 24, architects R. Crawford and A. Rebeck joined V. Luce for an inspection of the McClurg Museum, as part of a grant proposal to solve the moisture problem.

E. Schwanekamp attended the Advanced Grant Writing class at SUNY Fredonia on July 31.

J. O'Brien attended *Micrographics as a Records Management Tool* on July 31 in Bemus Point, sponsored by the New York State Archives.

In July and August, nine new members joined the society and over 380 people visited the McClurg Museum.

K. Grant taught two classes on the religious significance of labyrinths at Chautauqua Institution in July and August.

V. Richardson signed copies of *Telling Our Stories 1883-2000* at the Fredonia Farm Festival on Friday, August 16.

In August, the CCHS joined the Museum Association of New York and The Seaway Trail, Inc.

N. Hanks reprised *Memories of Burton's Inn*, her dramatic reading of Edna Burton Dunn's 1936 speech to the DAR, on September 12 for the Westfield Seniors Group.

Tell us what you're doing. Send details to CCHS, P.O. Box 7, Westfield NY 14787

CCHS Fall Luncheon:

Cemeteries: Not a Deadly Subject

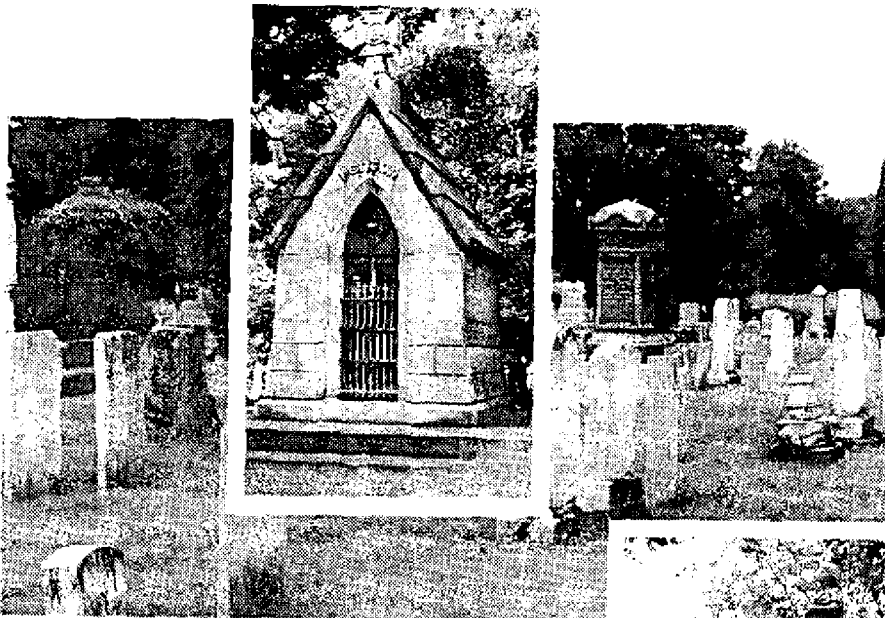
Join us on Saturday, October 26 at the Whist Inn located at 52 East Main Street, Fredonia. The cost of the luncheon is \$10.50 per person. Guests are welcome. After a delicious lunch, you can rest in peace and listen to our featured speaker. Please call 326-2977 for reservations.

Lois Barris, a trustee of the society and its necrologist, has spent the past 25 years digging up old records, burying herself in newspaper indexes, cemetery, school, and poor house records, as well as county census files. She has given up endless hours to the Chautauqua County Genealogical Society, which has published at least a dozen county cemetery guides.

Born in Sheridan, Barris has a BA degree from Syracuse University, where she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. She earned a Masters degree in education from SUNY Buffalo. She married her high school sweetheart in 1946, when Norwood Barris returned from World War II. Together they have raised five children. After retiring from a career in teaching in 1986, Barris combined her interest in genealogy with her skills on the computer.

Barris will lay out that cemeteries reflect history. They tell stories about people and places, about art and industry, about core beliefs. She asks, "Why do we refrain from speaking about cemeteries in polite society? Is it because of religion? Politics? Family secrets?" Her talk will lay to rest the issues underlying those questions.

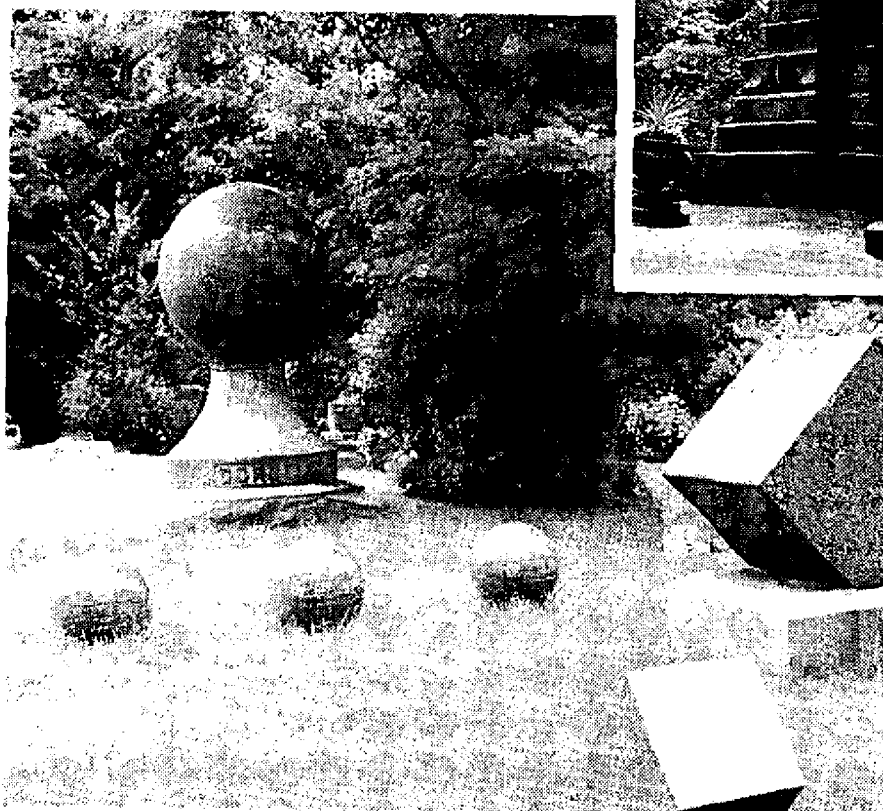
Plan to attend as Barris unearths some interesting anecdotes about grave robbers, spiritualists, and other light-hearted items of ghoulish interest. If you've ever wondered whether you could be buried in your own backyard, you'll learn the answer when Lois Barris gives us the dirt on cemeteries. Call today to RSVP. You'll dig it, as the kids say!



*"Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."*

A PSALM OF LIFE (1839)

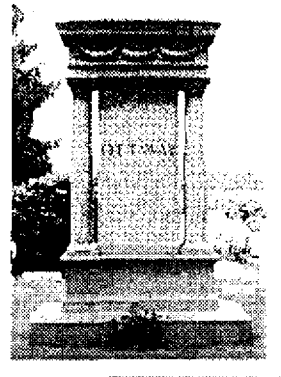
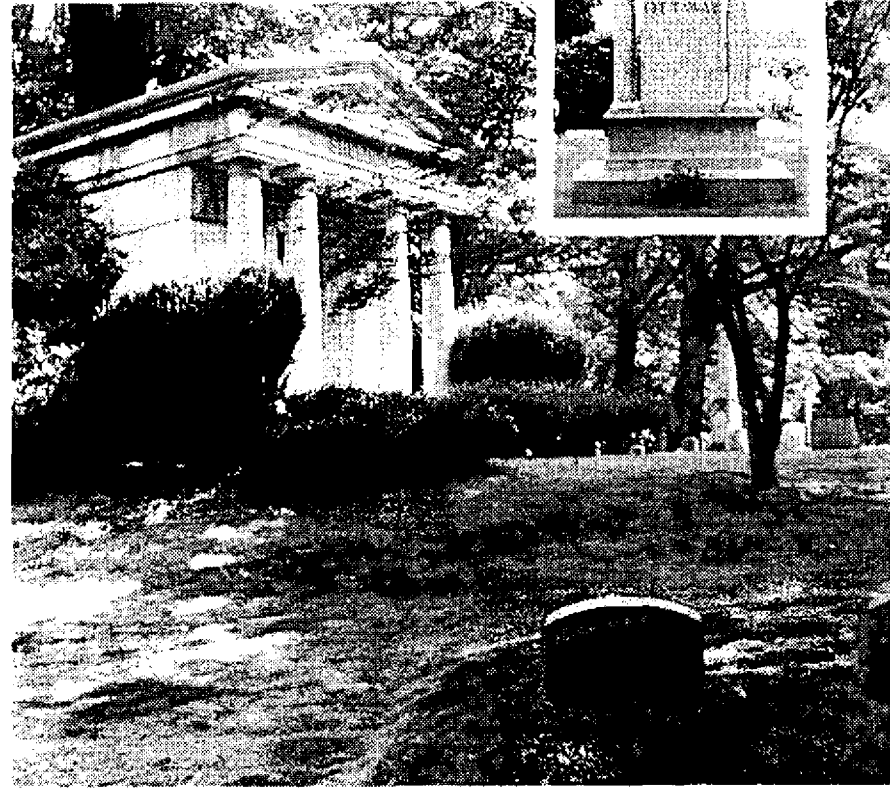
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



*"Why is it we rejoice at a birth and grieve at a funeral?
It is because we are not the person involved."*

PUDD'NHEAD WILSON (1894)

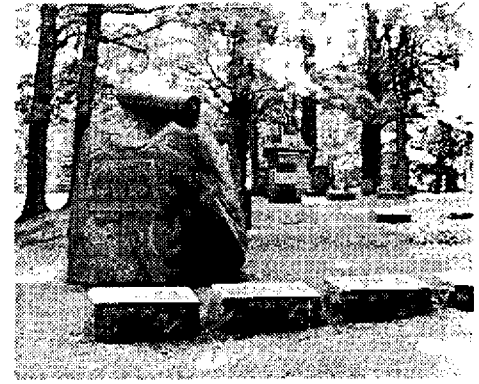
Mark Twain



"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"
CORINTHIANS 15:54-55
Paul of Tarsus

"O grave, where is thy victory? Where, indeed. Many a badly stung survivor, faced with the aftermath of some relative's funeral, has ruefully concluded that the victory has been won hands down by a funeral establishment."

THE AMERICAN WAY OF DEATH (1963)
Jessica Mitford



"Anything awful makes me laugh. I misbehaved once at a funeral."
LETTER TO SOUTHEY (1815)
Charles Lamb





Mettle in metal:

Standing proud in Sherman NY

THIS CONSTANT SENTINEL stands guard in front of the Yorker Museum. It is reassuring in these troubled times to know that we have faced great, grave challenges in the past and overcome them. We ache, but we grow stronger.

Our Society's mission to preserve history can't have a greater purpose than to comfort our children, and to inspire them to even greater heights of achievement. There's nothing to say but, "God Bless America."

The Fenton History Center

Jamestown's premiere heritage resource

We intend to spotlight other historical societies in each issue, to underscore the cultural richness within Chautauqua County. We encourage you to visit. —Editor

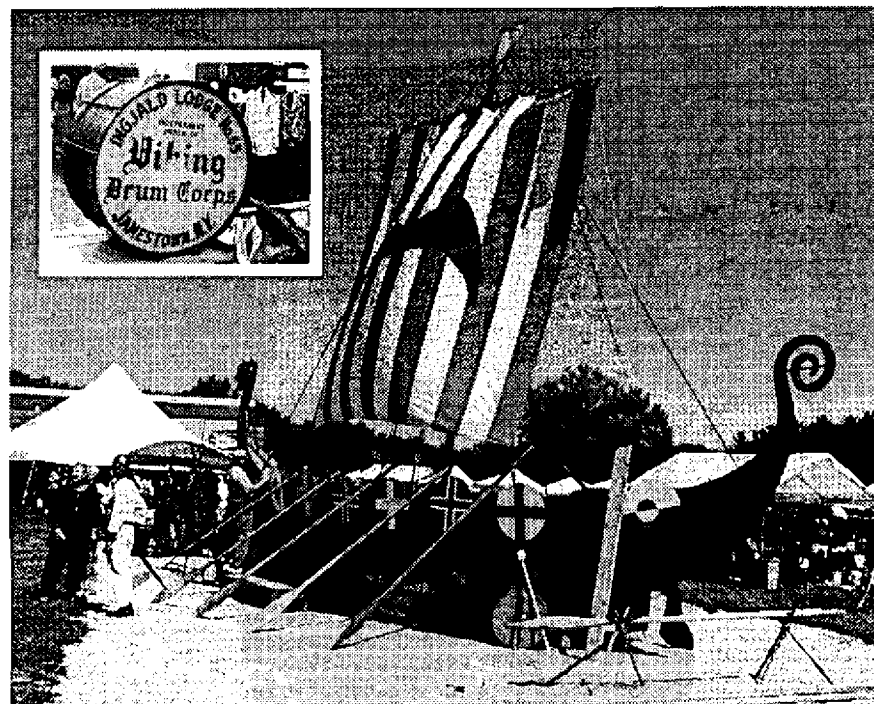
THE FENTON MUSEUM AND LIBRARY has been providing educational and cultural opportunities for over 35 years. Built in 1863 by Gov. Reuben E. Fenton, one of the county's more illustrious sons, his Italianate mansion stands high atop a hill, with splendid, panoramic views of the city from its distinctive tower.

The museum offers a 5,000-volume reference library, genealogy archives, a collection of rare photographs, period rooms, and special exhibitions. The center provides educational programs and guided tours by appointment. Walk-in visitors are welcome to tour the museum with a guide book. The center is located at 67 Washington Street, Jamestown NY. Open Monday thru Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For information, call 664-6256.

On A Voyage of Discovery (Without Leaving Land)

The Scandinavian Folk Festival is a Celebration of Swedish Culture

A SEAFARING RACE with sophisticated metallurgy and woodcraft changed the history of Europe in the 10th century. Their descendants arrived here in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Several hundreds of people learned their history and enjoyed their culture at the Scandinavian Folk Festival, which was held September 6-8 at the Lutheran Social Services Campus in Jamestown. A delightful mix of crafts, foods, performance, and local history provided visitors with a tantalizing introduction to an important part of Chautauqua County culture. If you've never been, you'll want to attend next year. *(For more information about the Swedish contribution to local history, be sure to visit the Fenton History Center. They have an entire room devoted to it. —Editor)*



Above: A reconstructed Viking ship. Inset: A bass drum from Jamestown's Viking Drum Corps.



Wayne Mori greets young Mormons who attended his lecture.

A Review: Mormonism and Chautauqua County

Capacity crowd hears a chilling story of persecution and survival

Mr. Wayne A. Mori was the featured speaker at the society's Summer luncheon, held August 17th at Webb's Captain's Table. Speaking of the Mormon influence in the early 19th century, Mori said, "Mormonism struck Chautauqua County like a mighty wind, picking up residents and depositing them all over the country. Reviled in the press at the time, Mormonism was described as a menace, as incredible, as fanaticism.

The effect of Mormonism here was profound. Hundreds of people were involved, and it literally tore families apart. Many left the county altogether, moving first to Kirtland, Ohio and then to Illinois. Mori never took a position regarding Joseph Smith's convictions. Instead, he allowed us to consider the effects those convictions had on the lives of the Saints, as they were called. They were persecuted, some even killed. In fact, a paramilitary organization called Zion's Army was organized to defend the faith, but a cholera epidemic decimated them "out West." Many were lucky to return home with their lives.

An interesting piece of research was the highlight of the afternoon. Reading somewhere that over 500 people attended a Mormon religious service in Westfield in 1835, Mori didn't think it was possible. Were there even 500 residents in the village then? Where would they have stayed? Digging further, Mori felt he had the answer. He teased the audience by asking them what they thought, and it wasn't long before Lois Barris came up with the answer. It was the public execution of Joseph Damon in Mayville, eight miles south of Westfield. Over 15,000 people came to the county to see it. So there were plenty of people around the area to attend the Mormon service. At that point the skies darkened, then opened, and a heavy rain beat a loud tattoo on the windows as if scripted.

It was a fascinating presentation. Six young Mormons in the audience learned an important part of their history and the role that Chautauqua County played in it. The society thanks Mr. Mori for his passion and consideration.

Coming Events:

Things for you to see and do

October

12 Findley Lake and Mina Historical Society

Findley Lake Community Center
Archaeologist Dr. James Adovasio signs copies of *The First Americans* at a public reception. 7 p.m.
769-7848 for information.

13 Chautauqua County Genealogical Society: Its 25th Anniversary

Chautauqua Institution
Join the NYS Association of Public Historians' 3-day weekend conference. Call 326-2977 for details.

26 Autumn CCHS Luncheon Meeting

The White Inn
52 East Main St., Fredonia
"CEMETERIES: NOT A DEADLY TOPIC"
Lois Barris (Pg. 4, this issue.) Noon

November

13 Northern Chautauqua Victorian Society

Barker Library & Museum
7 Day St., Fredonia
Monthly meeting of the society.
Open to all interested adults. 7 pm
672-2114 for information.

29 Celebrations of the Season Revisited

Fenton History Center
67 Washington St., Jamestown NY
Annual Christmas display at restored Fenton home. Thru 11/6
Daily 10 am to 4 pm, Sun. 1 - 4 pm
664-6256 for information.

December

14 CCHS Christmas Open House

McClurg Museum
Village Park in Westfield
Historic 1820's mansion decorated for the holidays. (Program to be announced.) Call 326-2977 for details

Missy Norton
~~Bette Prendergast
18964 River's Edge Dr.
Chagrin Falls, OH 44022~~

Address correction requested

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CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Chris Hanks chats with Mrs. Marilyn Norton, a lifelong friend.

A very special thanks:

Acknowledging the outstanding achievements of a friend to the Society

We had the privilege of repaying a debt of gratitude when Christopher Hanks attended our Summer luncheon in August. Chris was in town to visit his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hanks. He and his wife now live in Yellow Knife, NWT, Canada.

In the 1970s Chris was responsible for designing, building and installing the basement displays at the McClurg. In addition, he cataloged the objects now on display. As a result, visitors have a much greater understanding of domestic life of the county in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Hanks was presented with a lifetime membership to the society for his contributions. On behalf of the members, officers and trustees of the society, our most profound thank you, Chris.