

# MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

Sept 2010

## President's Message

Greetings!

As the season changes we are gearing up for our second annual October walk event. Last year we walked the streets of the village and saw many of the fine abodes of former residents. This year we will walk through Boxwood Cemetery and see the final resting places of many of those same residents. Adam Tabelski will again lead the walks, dispensing tales and facts in his inimitable style. Apart from their popularity, these walks generate much needed operating funds for the Museum.

The Boxwood Cemetery walks are scheduled for Sunday, October 24 and Saturday, October 30 at 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm. Tickets are \$10 and will be available from the Shirt Factory Café.

The Museum has participated in Medina's Wine about Winter and Ale in Autumn events. Both have been very successful. We counted 244 people at Ale in Autumn on September 25, many of whom were new visitors to the Museum – all were impressed by the items on display.

As I dispensed beer for Ale in Autumn, I wondered what the Chase/Merritts would think of the occasion. I suspect that they might have been adherents of the Temperance Society. Perhaps they will let us know as we walk by their burial site in Boxwood!

**Medina's Olde Tyme  
Christmas Celebration  
Saturday, Nov. 27  
10:00 am till 7:00 pm,  
featuring the "Parade of  
Lights" at 6:00 pm.**

## Request for Information

Ron Stork picked up a Medina-made fire nozzle made in 1874. This fire nozzle was made for a Medina fire pumper that was made for one year, in 1874. If anyone has any information regarding fire nozzles being made in Medina, please contact Ron.

Do you have some great ideas about how to improve this newsletter?

Would you like to become more active in the Medina Historical Society?

Do you like to be creative and express yourself?

The Medina Bugle is looking for a new editor.

If interested, please contact Catherine Cooper.

**Buffalo's Own First Lady:  
Frances Folsom Cleveland  
by Mark D. Evans**

*The following is an excerpt from Mark D. Evans, "Buffalo's Own First Lady: Frances Folsom Cleveland" which appeared in the Spring 2010 issue of Western New York Heritage. (c) Western New York Heritage Press, Inc. and Mark D. Evans, used by permission. Thanks to Jack Wasnock for securing the permission.*

Buffalo Beginnings. It all began on Edward Street, number 168, in a tree-lined residential neighborhood near downtown Buffalo, New York. A daughter, Frances Clara Folsom, was born to Buffalo attorney Oscar Folsom and his wife, Emma, on July 21, 1864. No one could guess or imagine what was in store for this young daughter of Buffalo who would one day take center stage as the youngest and most popular first lady in American history. The modest, two-story brick home where she was born still stands in Buffalo's historic Allentown district and was often visited by Oscar's law partner, an up-and-coming young lawyer, Grover Cleveland. He bought Frances her first baby carriage and was soon affectionately known as "Uncle Cleve."

The family occupied the Buffalo home until 1873, when the death of Oscar's brother prompted a move to rural Folsomdale in Wyoming County. While the family helped care for Oscar's father, and his brother's widow and her four children, Oscar commuted the roughly 25 miles to the law office in Buffalo that he shared with Cleveland. Tragedy struck the family in 1875, just days after Frances' 11th birthday. Oscar Folsom was driving his carriage at dusk through a Buffalo intersection when it struck a wagon. He was thrown from his

carriage and died within hours. Since Folsom died without a will, a Buffalo court named Grover Cleveland as administrator of the estate. Contrary to many accounts, he was not appointed as Frances' guardian, nor she his ward. He did however, look after the widow Emma and her daughter, guiding Frances' education and supervising their finances. With their future uncertain, Frances and her mother moved to live with relatives, briefly in Saint Paul, Minnesota and then to Medina, New York before settling back in Buffalo in a series of rented quarters.

Frances attended the Medina Academy for Boys and Girls and Buffalo's Central High School. By this time, Cleveland had risen from assistant district attorney, to a term as Erie County sheriff (1871-73), then to mayor of Buffalo, serving in 1882. After high school, Frances enrolled at Wells College in Aurora, New York, one of the first liberal arts colleges for women, where she excelled academically and formed several lifelong friendships among the all-girl student body. She later became a fund raiser and trustee of the college, serving in that capacity for 40 years. When philanthropist Andrew Carnegie endowed the college library in 1911, it was named in her honor. It was while Frances was attending Wells College that a correspondence began between the young student and Cleveland, who was now governor of New York (1883-1885). Floral bouquets would arrive at the school from the Governor's mansion and the lifelong acquaintance soon blossomed into a quiet romance. Frances later told friends that she became aware of the growing affection that was developing between them at the time. They were secretly engaged for a period of two years.

Grover Cleveland's meteoric political career continued. As the bachelor New York governor was elected president in 1884, secret plans for a marriage were already in the works. In fact, there is a newspaper account, dated just weeks after the election, which suggested that Cleveland and the young Miss Folsom were engaged. Other accounts paired Cleveland and Frances's mother Emma, fueling even greater speculation in the popular press.

Following her graduation from Wells, in 1885, Frances and her mother departed on a nine-month tour of Europe, which introduced her to European customs and society. She took advantage of the opportunity to furnish her wardrobe for the expected role as mistress of the White House. Returning to New York City in May of 1886, she was besieged by reporters consumed with rumors and speculation about a possible wedding.

### **The Harringtons at War, Part I** **By Adam Tabelski**

Micah Harrington settled in Shelby in 1813 with an illustrious pedigree. He came not from wealth or nobility, but from a stock of Massachusetts men who fired the “shot heard round the world” on Lexington Green—the opening salvo of the long and bloody struggle for American independence.

Before dawn on the morning of April 19, 1775, dozens of militia men, dubbed “minutemen,” gathered on the green in Lexington to stand in the way of a column of British troops marching to Concord. “The reg’lars are coming!” Paul Revere had warned them in a midnight ride through town just a few hours before. One of the men who responded to the alarm was the 28-year-old Thomas Harrington. His older brother, Jonathan, whose house stood

opposite the green, was there, too, along with assorted Harrington kinsfolk—Caleb, Thaddeus, Daniel, John, another Jonathan, and two Moseses. In fact, “Harrington” was the most common surname among the minutemen.

The redcoats arrived at daybreak, and one of their officers shouted, “Disperse, you rebels!” Some of the militia began to scatter from the green, and some held their ground. Then, from some unknown corner, a lone shot was fired, and the violence began. Thomas’ role in the skirmish is unknown, but we know that Jonathan Harrington, Micah’s uncle, was hit with a musket ball in the chest. In great agony he crawled back from the green to his nearby house. His wife, Ruth, watching at the window, saw him struggling and rushed to his aid, but he collapsed before she could reach him. Jonathan’s fate is recorded not only in history books, but in a poem about the battle penned by Sidney Lanier in the mid-nineteenth century: “Clasp, Wife, and kiss, and lift the head/ Harrington lies at his door-step dead.” The house, on Harrington Road, which forms the northern boundary of Lexington Green, is still there today.

Thomas survived the battle and the war. Micah was born to him and his wife, Lucy, in 1782. Over the years, the family worked its way west. Micah put down roots in Shelby Center when he was about the same age as his father was in 1775.

Micah Harrington became a minuteman of sorts in his own era when he raised a company of American volunteers after the British captured Fort Niagara and burned Lewiston in December 1813. As a civilian, Micah was a farmer and surveyor who worked with the Ellicott family in laying out plots of land and roads in Orleans County. He also helped

build and later ran the Ellicott mills in Shelby Center.

Micah died in 1831 and is interred in Mount Albion Cemetery. The tradition of conspicuous military service continued in yet another generation of Harringtons with Micah's Indian-fighting nephew, Henry Moore Harrington, who will be the subject of Part II of this series.

**“The Harringtons at War, Part II”**  
**By Adam Tabelski**

Henry Moore Harrington, who died with Custer, was born in Barre on April 30, 1849. He is recorded in the 1850 federal census as being one year old and residing with his parents, Shelby and Nancy (Moore) Harrington, in the Town of Albion.

When he was about seven years old, his immediate family moved to Coldwater, Michigan, although some aunts, uncles, and cousins remained in Orleans County. Growing up, Henry probably considered Coldwater his hometown, not Albion. But our local connection to this distinguished military hero is worthy of note.

Henry completed a three-year college preparatory school in Cleveland in 1867 and soon gained admission to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Upon his graduation in 1872, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, United States Army. This was the unit of George Armstrong Custer, a fellow son of Michigan, whom he probably admired greatly. Henry probably heard many stories of Custer's Civil War exploits growing up in Michigan; one wonders if his father also told him about Henry's grandfather's service in the War of 1812, or his great-

grandfather's brave stand on the Lexington Green?

Henry's first assignment was training troops in North Carolina. In the Tarheel State, he and his wife, Grace Berard, whom he courted at West Point, had a daughter, Grace Aileen, in December. A son, Harry, would come along a year later. In the spring of 1873, Henry received orders to go to the West to join the main body of his unit. He took part in the Yellowstone Expedition of that year, and wrote news reports for publication in his hometown newspaper, the *Coldwater Republican*. He spent most of the next three years on various expeditions in the environs of Montana, the Dakotas, and Nebraska.

Sadly, Henry's life was cut short at the age of 27 in the midst of the largest Indian battle of the West, near the Little Bighorn River, on June 25, 1876. Custer's command of approximately 600 lost half its strength. Of course, it lost Custer, too.

By the summer of 1876, Henry was commanding Company C and thus had an important leadership role in the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Nathaniel Philbrick, in his new book, *The Last Stand*, relates that several Indians commented after the epic battle that there was an unknown mounted officer with a black moustache whom they regarded, in their words, as “the bravest man they had ever seen.” Henry fit that description, as Philbrick acknowledges. The author adds, “He had more opportunities than any other officer to distinguish himself by courageously covering the retreat of his men.”

The researcher Walt Cross, in *Custer's Lost Officer: the Search for Henry Moore Harrington*, firmly believes

Henry to be “the bravest man.” Cross further asserts that Henry was killed at the very end of the battle, while struggling to make an escape after his command was decimated. He also argues that a skull found on the battlefield in 1877 and now held by the Smithsonian is Henry’s. It is an undisputed fact that no other human remains of Henry have ever been found.

**The Day ‘The Babe’ Hit One Over  
The Fence in Medina  
Submitted by Chris Tompkins**

It was just 41 years ago yesterday that baseball fans here were at fever pitch. The immortal Babe was due in town with a couple of big league sidekicks to play for Medina in a game against the Lockport All-Stars at Oak Orchard Park.

This anniversary might have gone unnoticed except for the vigilance and good memory of Medina’s foremost baseball historian, Walter “Ike” Whittleton, 142 S. Main St.

Whittleton visited the Journal-Register office early this morning to kindle some memories of that big October day in 1920.

Babe Ruth was on the rise and the toast of the sports world, although it was seven years later before he blasted out those 60 homers.

Through efforts of some of the local baseball addicts, including Art Cleary who umpired the game, Ruth came to Medina on tour. With him were Vick Hoffman and Carl Mays, also of the Yankees, and Jeff Tesreau, former Giant hurler.

The Journal reported the following day that Ruth was in excellent form despite a wrist injury. In the first inning he fanned, in the next trip he tripled and the

third time he let loose with the eagerly awaited homer over the right field fence. The first home run of the day, however, was hit by Lockport’s Fenton “Darb” Whalen, known to many as Western New York’s droll comic of baseball. It’s rumored that he turned to the visiting Ruth and reminded him that, “You may be the big shot in the city, but I’m a big shot in the country.”

Mays started as pitcher for Medina but was relieved in the fifth by Eddie Cottriss, who fanned 10 of the 15 men to face him.

Playing for Medina from the hometown talent were Louie Raymondjack, Frank “Skinny” Boyle and Roy “Crab” Montgomery as infielders, and Gene Dowd and George Butts as outfielders.

Lockport’s lineup listed Lewis and O’Neill as pitchers, Brown at catch, O’Hearn, Whalen, Oates and Harrer in the infield and Sandusky, Blake and Mack in the outfield.

Oh yes. Medina won 6-2.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

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**MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER  
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**MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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**ADDRESS:**  
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**MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ATTN: MEMBERSHIP CHAIR  
406 WEST AVENUE  
MEDINA, NY 14103**

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Medina Historical Society  
406 West Avenue  
Medina, NY 14103  
Phone: (585) 798-3006  
<http://www.historicmedina.org/>