

MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

Nov 2011

President's Message

During the start of the Holiday season I often stop and reflect how thankful I am to live in this wonderful community with so much history but mostly I am thankful for all the members of the Medina Historical Society who help preserve, restore and protect our history not only for ourselves but for future generations.

Don't miss the next meeting that will be presented by Tom Klotzbach on "Cold War Artifacts: the White Deer of Seneca Army Depot"

Open House at the Museum
Saturday Nov 26th, 1-3 pm
Volunteers needed

Parade of Lights at 6:00PM
Nov 26, 2011

Blessed Thanksgiving to all

Next Monthly Meeting

**Medina Historical Society
November 28, 2011 at
7:00pm**

Lee-Whedon Library

Officers 2011

**President: Cindy Robinson
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Editor : Reinhard Rogowski

THE HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK
By Russell J. Waldo, Village Historian
Originally Published On November
27, 1957

PIONEER DAY
THANKSGIVING

When you close the door of your automobile on Thanksgiving Day to visit some relative it would be interesting to look backwards to 1811. This was the first Thanksgiving to be celebrated in the present Towns of Ridgeway and Shelby. Notes passed along from recollections of great-grandchildren and historical notes will provide some thoughts that will serve to impress the present generation.

The close of 1810 found about eighteen adults in the area. Crude homes of logs had been erected to shelter them. Others had been started in the woods. About half a dozen men had filed claims upon land and had returned to their eastern homes for tools so that they might go ahead with building cabins during the winter months. While this was being done they would arrange to live with those people already in the area.

The settlers established for the winter of 1810-11 included Seymour Murdock, west of Ridgeway; Eli Moore, Ridgeway Corners; Stephen Lombard, west of Ridgeway; Alexander Coon, west of Shelby Center; Ezekial Bentley, south of Shelby Center; Whitfield Rathbun, near Bentley and Elijah Bennett, west of present Medina. Bennett came in 1810 but did not article his lands until 1811. These hardy settlers, all men, gathered at Eli Moore's at Ridgeway, now the hotel, and observed thanksgiving in a crude sort of a way reading the Scriptures and preparing a meal of game that they had hunted the day before.

The following year found more settlers coming into the area. Among

these were Ezra Barnes, near Ridgeway; Otis Turner, east of Ridgeway; Israel Douglas, a Justice of the Peace, near Oak Orchard; Amos Barrett, near Murdock's; Hezekiah Coon, east of Ridgeway; Elijah Brown and Israel March, near Coon.

Newcomers in 1811 in the Town of Shelby were John Timmerman, west of Shelby Center; Daniel Fuller, Jacob Zimmerman and Franklin Bennett, all near Medina and Elijah Bent, west of Medina.

Eli Moore left the information that the 1811 gathering of the settlers heard the complete proclamation signed by the nation's first president George Washington asking the people to give thanks. This was signed and dated October 3, 1789.

Part of it follows, "Whereas, it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the provinces of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits and humbly implore His protection and favor and,

"Whereas, both houses of Congress have by their joint committees requested me to recommended to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed and acknowledged with grateful favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peacefully to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness,

"Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th. day of November next, to be devoted by the people of the United States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or will be, that we may all then unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interpositions of His providence in the course and

conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceful and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted; for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed.”

During the summer of 1811, settlers talked of a Thanksgiving gathering when the settlers of the area would come together for a day of prayer and thanksgiving as had been their custom in their eastern homes. The group decided to meet at the cabin of Elijah Bent a little west of the present Medina. This would make long treks through the woods unnecessary by those without horses. There were only five or six horses among the less than dozen settlers at that time. The winter would find others being brought in where shelter would be provided for them.

Eli Moore left a fragmentary record in which some of the settlers who attended the gathering were listed. These were from the Town of Ridgeway; Israel March, Seymour Murdock, Israel Douglas, Otis Turner and Elijah Brown.

Those attending from the Town of Shelby; Alaxander Coon, John Timmerman, Daniel Fuller, Jacob Freeman, Ezekial Bentley, Whitfield Rathbun and Franklin Bennett.

The men spent the previous day in the woods hunting game for the dinner, bringing rabbits, deer, fish and muskrats.

The Bent cabin was about twenty by twenty-six feet with a fireplace in both ends. It had a dirt floor. The logs were well cut and carefully chinked in. Stone chimneys had been laid up in clay and protected by log sheathing. A huge hewn table was in the middle of the room with benches around the ends of the room.

The day was one of snow. Late in the afternoon it began to snow very hard filling in the tracks made by the settlers as they came to the Bent cabin in the forenoon. This made it difficult for those returning to their cabins about dark to find their way.

Elijah Bentley lost the tracks he had made and would have been stranded except for seeing a light in the woods. He followed this and came to the cabin of Eleazer Frary southwest of Medina. Frary had been to Batavia for supplies and did not attend the gathering. Bentley remained for the night with Frary, returning to his cabin in the morning. During this period his wife had returned to their former home to bring the children and some household goods on the journey with other settlers in the spring.

At this time, the only thing that could be termed a trail was the one used by the Indians along Oak Orchard Creek. It was this trail that the settlers followed when they took grain to Batavia. If they were going to Niagara Falls for milling, they went by the Ridge Road Trail.

Settlers had planned on having circuit rider Zachariah Paddock with them for Thanksgiving and the three days following that they might enjoy worship services in different cabins. Paddock was delayed by the storm and sickness of a settler near Clarkson and did not arrive until two weeks later.

His arrival in the area was a cause for rejoicing as the settlers, all devout followers of some Christian faith, would gather in a cabin for extended worship, preaching and singing in which the settlers and their wives would enter wholeheartedly.

The meal of the day was made up of meats, fish, bread, and nuts in great quantities which had been gathered and stored in the fall.

Despite the simplicity of the menus and activities those gatherings were

noted for their sincere religious feeling, somewhat in contrast with today's lavish meals of vast variety and the laxity in attendance at a church worship service.

Presented by Jack Wansock:

Goose for Thanksgiving Dinner.

Some where between 1948 and 1950. Grandma King had a flock of geese. She told the family that she would furnish the meat for Thanksgiving if someone would kill and dress the geese,(I don't know how many,) cook them and hold Thanksgiving dinner. I don't know who killed and dressed the geese, but Aunt Janet roasted the geese. She and Uncle Bunk hosted the dinner. All the families that came brought a dish to pass.

Late on Thanksgiving Day, we all gathered in Waterport, for dinner. The adults put us grandchildren in the kitchen. There were at least ten of us maybe more.

Every little bit one of the Aunts would check on us, and ask if there was anything we wanted. We kept asking when were we going to get some goose. Every time a dish was brought to our table it was dressing. We grandchildren did not get one piece of goose.

On the way home my brother Larry and I both spoke about getting dressing instead of the goose. Dad, told us, we were wrong. Any way all of us grandchildren told the same story and the adults finality had to admit that someone had goofed.

Grandma, felt very bad about this and stated that she would fix all the grandchildren a goose dinner, with no adults. Alas grandma got sick before she could raise the geese.

**INDIVIDUAL (\$15.00/YR)
FAMILY (\$20.00/YR)**

NAME(S):

ADDRESS:

PHONE:

E-MAIL:

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AND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER
TO:**

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

MEMBERSHIP DUES: _____

ADDITIONAL DONATION: _____

TOTAL AMOUNT: _____

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