

# MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

Dec 2011

## President's Message

This month we have two great articles one presented by Criag Lacy titled the **Holland-Land Company Christmas** and **A little Christmas tree history** presented by Georgia Thomas. Thank both of you for letting us look back into our past and the wonder of Christmas.

Hope you all had a chance to attend the Old Thyme Christmas celebration and the Parade of Lights Nov 26. It was a great event and a perfect way to start the Holiday season in Historic Medina NY.

To all the members of the Medina Historical Society and loyal readers of the Bugle I wish to extend a blessed and peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## Next Monthly Meeting

**Medina Historical Society  
No meeting in December**

**Happy Holiday's**

## Officers 2011

**President: Cindy Robinson  
Vice President: Craig Lacy  
Treasurer: Sandy Tompkins  
Secretary: Shane Sia  
Board: Chris Tompkins,  
Georgia Thomas, Catherine  
Copper**

**Editor : Reinhard Rogowski**

**HOLLAND LAND COMPANY  
CHRISTMAS  
By Russell J. Waldo  
Originally Published On December  
24, 1941**

Few can imagine the advance planning required to make Christmas gifts assured in 1800 and shortly afterwards. Today we wait until a day or two before Christmas then saunter into the crowd, select a gift, pay for it and walk out. When Andrew and Joseph Ellicott landed in the present town of Shelby they had ideas about Christmas gifts but they were required to order those gifts far in advance. They had lived in Baltimore, Maryland, and they wrote to friends there to send on the things they wished for Christmas.

There was a far greater significance to the Yuletide season. Christmas was not as highly commercialized then as now. In Andrew Ellicott's day, Christmas was observed with a man sized dinner of roast, wild fowl, often deer, nuts, and such other luxuries as could be secured from the forest or from Batavia or Rochester.

Eli Moore and Andrew Ellicott rode horseback to Rochester along what is now the Ridge Road to buy some fancy items for the observance of Christmas. Eli brought back among other things a Bible, a waist coat, riding boots, goodly supply of tobacco, some city cloth and candle moulds. Andrew Ellicott brought some books of a religious nature, a new saddle (on his horse), Sunday boots, and a picture to adorn his wall.

The journey required two days to go and a like number for the return. They remained in Rochester three days, one being Sunday, and attended church in an elaborate edifice near the falls of the Genesee. They stayed with some of Andrew's acquaintances.

On their return they ran into a blinding snow storm. They believed they were not so far from Ridgeway but it was dark. They halted near a dense underbrush for nearly an hour until they fury of the snow subsided then they resumed their journey. The first cabin they passed after that was east of the present Knowsville Road but they pressed on. Their horses stopped when they reached the bank of Oak Orchard Creek and they forded it arriving at Moore's Tavern in the morning. The administration of liquor seasoned with peppermint prevented severe colds.

A year or two later Andrew Ellicott, together with Mr. Moore, decided to go into Christmas buying upon a mere lavish scale. The canal had been completed and they took passage to New York in August to Albany thence to New York. Andrew recalled the shops as hodge podge with a very meager line of wares. However, the intervening years had changed this and more brilliant fancy dry goods had made their appearance in the shops.

The chintzes and linens were suspended in pieces or festooned about the room. There were shop men behind the counters smiling and it attracted the two backwoodsmen. Boxes and even bales of English merchandise were before the doors of merchants. Clerks and apprentices, subordinates and merchants were busily engaged with sharp knives and claw hammers ripping open boxes and bales. Indoors clerks were busy displaying the new ware. Altogether, it displayed a pleasant bustle of rivalry and competition which attracted them.

All sums of money were even then largely computed in pounds, shillings, pence and farthings. Dollars and cents were used mostly in reports to Alexander Hamilton, the United States treasurer.

The principle streets invaded by the two were Dock and Queen Streets and one store mentioned was Beekman's.

The second winter Alexander Coon spent west of Shelby Center where he found conditions improved for him. Marsh hay had been gathered and brought into the cattle shelter for mixing with their feed. Two weeks before Christmas he rode to Batavia for necessities and a nick nack or two for gifts. He returned with his horse loaded with supplies as he walked along side of it through the woods. On his return he stopped for the night at a cabin on the Old Buffalo Road.

Their Christmas dinner consisted of griddle cakes, bread, salmon steak, venison, and herb tea. A veritable feast much unlike that he had been accustomed to.

Elisha Webster has left some interesting information concerning his visit to his son Luther's home on the Holland Land Purchase south of Shelby Center. The old log house has long since been destroyed by the relentless tooth of time.

"Luther's home is a primitive log cabin measuring ten by twenty feet", he wrote. A chamber has been provided by placing heavy timbers which are supported. This gives them a very cozy place to climb up to sleep. There is only one door and four windows which have been covered by oiled paper. Last summer the sidewalls were chinked with moss and clay making the cabin very warm. This is heated by a huge open fireplace in one end. Outside the cabin is an endless supply of logs and split logs to keep the fire going. Only last summer Luther built the chimney of log and lined it with clay. Before that it had been necessary for the smoke to leave through a hole in the roof. The fire was underneath it and it was covered when the fire was out. The discomforts of the

dripping water from this hole in the roof were eliminated by the new fireplace.

"His cattle and horses are kept in a very warm shelter. Four notched trees have been set into the ground and logs laid upon four sides. Rafters were then laid. Marsh hay and leaves were piled high around the shelter.

The house is lighted by the open fireplace until time for going to bed. Stools and tables have been made from slabs with legs fitted into the lower side of them.

"I'm going to help Luther make some more chairs and a bigger and better table. He expects the justice and his wife, Ebenezer and his wife over for Christmas. There are six bearskin blankets for the beds which have been built in the corners of the room.

Luther went to Batavia December 22, 1821, to buy a few things. While there he visited Ezra Mosher and he returned to the woods home with him for Christmas. After the breakfast was over, the men went out into the woods and brought back six fowl and eight rabbits. These were added to the Christmas feast.

### **A little Christmas tree history:**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century a monk we now know as St. Boniface from Crediton, Devonshire, England went to Thuringia, Germany and there he adapted their use of trees and greens in the house in winter to teach the Christian religion. He used the evergreen tree's shape as a triangle to represent the trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost and the fact that it was always green and alive as God was always alive to us.

Martin Luther had a Christmas tree that he decorated with candles to show his children how the stars created by God twinkle through the night.

1601 is the first recorded history of decorations on the tree, and the decorations were wafers (cookies), sugar twists, nuts and flowers, the red flowers to represent knowledge and white flowers to represent innocence.

In 1610 tinsel was introduced in Germany, it originally was silver pulled very thin, but it tended to tarnish, other materials like lead, were tried but silver was the favorite until now when we have our modern tinsel of manmade material.

The Georgian Kings introduced the Christmas tree to England, Queen Victoria's husband Prince Albert brought the German custom to England and in 1846 the London News showed an illustration of the royal family gathered around the table top tree. That really started the custom of the Christmas tree in the home to England and the rest of the world.

It should be noted that the Hessian soldiers that stayed in America after the Revolutionary War had Christmas trees in their homes and limited areas where they lived but

the traditions really didn't catch on in the whole of the new nation.

Decorations evolved from home made to glass with Germany being the leader in manufactured decorations, fine glass ornaments from Germany are still prize possessions today if not a bit pricey.

In the 1850's trees were table top and handmade decorations, and very few American homes had them. As the years progressed more Americans embraced the Christmas tree and had them in their homes. By the time of the late Victorian Era and Edwardian Era Christmas trees were all the "rage" and decorations went "wild" with the opulence of the time.

One of the first recorded history of electric lights on a tree, was an associate of Thomas Edison, Edward H. Johnson, he had a string of 80 red, white and blue lights (with bulbs the size of walnuts) in his home in 1882.

*We here in Medina might want to take note:* that in 1895 our own Francis Folsom Cleveland and her husband, President Grover Cleveland, were the first Presidential couple to have electric lights on their White House tree!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

INDIVIDUAL (\$15.00/YR)

FAMILY (\$20.00/YR)

NAME(S):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE:

\_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL:

\_\_\_\_\_

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION  
AND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER  
TO:

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

MEMBERSHIP DUES: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL DONATION: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT: \_\_\_\_\_

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

