MEDINA BUGLE

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President's Message

On June 08, 1812 the Town of Ridgeway was formed from the town of Batavia. Seymour Murdock was the first settler and came to Ridgeway in June 1810. How exciting it must have been for the Murdock family to settle into this beautiful area. I can only imagine the emotions that the family felt.

Please mark your calendars for June 25, 2012 for our annual Picnic hosted by Frank and Nancy Berger. Please bring a dish to pass and your good humor and plan to have a great time.

We have many exciting events planned for the rest of year which include the Ghost Walk on Oct 13 and Holiday night at the Museum where we will reveal the Russell Waldo history book Craig Lacy has been working on. More details to follow in the coming months.

Please enjoy the articles presented by Catherine Cooper and Bridgette Yaxley.

Next Monthly Meeting

**Annual Picnic
6:00PM
Frank & Nancy Bergers
3226 N Gravel Rd**

Officers 2012
**President Reinhard Rogowski
Vice President: Craig Lacy
Treasurer: Sandy Tompkins
Secretary: Shane Sia
Board: Cindy Robinson, Georgia Thomas, Catherine Cooper, Frank Berger**

TOWN OF RIDGEWAY, ORLEANS COUNTY BICENTENNIAL PROCLAMATION

The Town of Ridgeway was formed from the Town of Batavia on June 8th, 1812. It was the first town incorporated in what is now Orleans County and originally included the towns of Ridgeway, Shelby, Gaines, Barre, Carlton, Gaines and Albion. It stretched from Lake Ontario in the north as far south as the present line north of the Towns of Alabama and Elba in Genesee County. This entire area was about sixteen miles wide from north to south and covered an area of about three hundred square miles, about three quarters of the acreage of the present county of Orleans. The town was named for "The Ridge", a natural embankment formed as the southern boundary of the glacial Lake Iroquois, which had long been used as an east to west route by Native Americans and other travelers. The area was at that time still heavily timbered and covered with a dense forest of beech, maple, ash, oak, chestnut, elm, hickory, hemlock, whitewood and basswood trees.

The town boundaries were redefined gradually. The Town of Gaines was established in 1816 by a Special Act of the Legislature passed February 14, 1816. The Town of Ridgeway was then divided into two towns by an Act of the Legislature of the State of New York on March 6, 1818, thus forming the Town of Shelby. The Town of Carlton was set off from the Towns of Gaines and Ridgeway on April 13, 1822. Originally called Northton, the Town of Yates was formed from Ridgeway on April 17, 1822.

Currently, the Town of Ridgeway has a total area of 50.3 square miles. Seymour Murdock was the first settler in the town, in the spring of 1810. He left his home in Dutchess County, and headed west in search of land, traveling with his family group of twelve members and a team of oxen. Leaving his family in Avon, he traveled on with his older son. At the Land Office in Batavia, he learned that settlements had been opened on the Ridge. He went on to Buffalo, followed the river to Lewiston, then went east along the Ridge and when about two miles east of the boundary of Orleans County, he came upon two men named Lampson, eating their dinner by a tree they had just cut down. These men had bought part of lot 24, township 15, range 4 from the Holland Land Company. Mr. Murdock purchased their rights from them, and then returned to Avon by way of Batavia to collect his family. Meanwhile, his son went east on the Ridge, seeking an easier route. Travel was difficult to say the least; the "roads" were almost impassable. One of the many obstacles they encountered was an almost perpendicular ascent from the stream at Otter Creek in Gaines. They removed the oxen from the wagon, drove them up the incline, and attached chains to the wagon below. Arriving finally at their selected lot, they camped in the wagon for another six weeks until they had felled trees and built a cabin. Such were the privations and experiences of the early settlers.

At first, the closest store and post office were in Batavia, a distance of thirty miles and the nearest grist mill in Niagara Falls, forty miles distant. Soon, more settlers arrived, and

gradually amenities were built. A grist mill was built on the Oak Orchard Creek in 1812 by Dr. White and David Hooker. Eli Moore built the first hotel and tavern on Ridgeway Corners in 1811; he also operated a small grocery and dry goods store there.

Seymour Murdock built the first frame barn in1812 of heavy oak timber, with the assistance of passing troops en route to the Niagara Frontier to participate in the War of 1812. Betsy Murdock, Seymour's daughter taught the first school there. Remarkably, this barn is still standing. The first log school house was built in 1815, on the north-west corner of lot 24.

In 1810 Harriet Murdock, daughter of Seymour and Catherine, was the first child born in the town. The first death was also in 1810, a young daughter of William Davis who was bitten by a mad dog and died of hydrophobia. She was the first person buried in West Ridgeway, the town's oldest cemetery which was located on the northeast corner of lot 24.

The first annual town meeting was held on Tuesday, April 6, 1813, at the home of John G. Brown. By then there were 173 taxable inhabitants with 30,556 taxable acres assessed to them. Oliver Booth was appointed the first Supervisor, and Israel Douglass the first Town Clerk. Elijah Hawley was the first Postmaster of the post office established at Ridgeway Corners on October 22, 1816.

The Ridge Road was laid out and established by Philetus Swift and Caleb Hopkins under an act of the Legislature passed on Feb. 10, 1815. Taxes were raised in 1825 to provide funds to bridge the Oak Orchard Creek. Meanwhile, surveyors for the Erie Canal first came to the area in 1816, and soon short stretches of the canal were being dug by local contractors. Access to these improved thoroughfares facilitated the arrival of more settlers and greatly improved opportunities for trade and commerce.

Salt was one of the first products sold, soon agricultural products were ready for the market. The discovery of Medina sandstone led to the development of a lucrative quarrying business now defunct, though the products still adorn many of the area's impressive buildings. But from the beginning, agriculture was the largest business in the county and it continues to generate the most revenue in the Town of Ridgeway to this day as the areas excellent soil and moderate climate are conducive to the cultivation of superior quality fruit and vegetables.

Currently the Town of Ridgeway has a population of 6,534. Some are descendants of the early settlers; many are descendants of the many ethnic groups who moved here in search of opportunity. Recently, Amish and Mennonite families have moved into the area, attracted by affordable land as well as commercial opportunities. Town inhabitants continue to be industrious and innovative, having adapted quickly to new digital technology. An enterprising farmer has established a successful vineyard and farm markets provide revenue for farmers and fresh quality food for shoppers. The town is home to Sigma, an innovative medical technology firm. Specialized small businesses, such as computer repair, thrive. Mindful of limited resources, citizens are informed about, and involved in, recycling and alternative power projects. A variety of retail stores can supply all of one's needs locally. The historic preservation of

our fine architectural treasures is a high priority.

The citizens of the Town of Ridgeway have adapted to the tumultuous changes of the last two hundred years. They fought in every war, and many made the ultimate sacrifice. They survived depressions and recessions. We salute the fortitude, enterprise and indomitable spirit of the early settlers and we applaud the industry, innovation and steadfastness of our current residents.

Mudbugs, Muskmelon, and Mayhem
By Bridgette M. Yaxley

Back in 1981, after lazily wandering around my aunt and uncle's rustic-styled farmhouse looking for something to preoccupy ourselves with one hot August evening, my cousin led me quietly to the kitchen and then quickly out the back door. I was almost eleven-years-old, innocently following her lead down a familiar country road in Orleans County, only about a half hour or so after dinner had finished, as we set off on our adventure, kicking gravel with the toes of our old Nike sneakers and wiping the sweat from my neck as we went.

After walking for a while, stopping momentarily to watch trucks filled with onions and beans race by, my cousin and I crossed a small dilapidated bridge. Underneath we found the trickle of a creek that flowed inconsistently, but the water was clear enough to reveal little mudbugs scattering about in all directions. To my childlike mind, they looked like tiny lobster, but creepy and crawly nonetheless!

We continued our exploration while the pockets of my britches kept clammering every second step I took due to that quick "pit stop" we made in the kitchen before our journey began. Finally my cousin motioned for me to hurry up and follow her off somewhere to the right side of the road, just up yonder past the trees and thick brush. I had actually lost sight of her momentarily. A few steps more and there she was carefully stepping over rows of muskmelon still beautifully ripe on the vine. She told me to catch up to her because she had found what she claimed was the perfect spot. As I approached her, I watched intently as my cousin expertly sliced a melon right from the vine and then cracked it wide open with this razor sharp knife she brought from home. Wow! One juicy melon after another and our faces were covered in thick sweetness, seeds from the innards were scattered about at our feet from spooning them out, and all as we continued to feast and gorge on that which was not our own. How long we may have stayed in that field of endless rows of melons is still a mystery, but when the sound of yelping hunting dogs and the sudden blast of gunfire echoed from the corner of the field – it was time to get up and run! In fact, we dropped every melon, spoon, and knife – possibly leaving a sneaker in our wake as we ran for our very lives! With our hearts racing and pounding, gasping for air, afraid to look back, we ran over

that dilapidated bridge, dashed down that country road and through the same yard that seemed so vast now, up onto the safety of the family porch and sat quickly down next to my aunt and uncle who just casually wondered what we two girls had been up to that evening as they took turns nonchalantly sipping homemade iced tea and kept pitting cherries.

"NOTHIN'!" we both said rapidly while out of breath and in unison, which not only provoked my aunt and uncle to give each other that immediate eyebrow-raising glance of skepticism adults master so well, but which then led to the inquisition of our summer!

Membership

INDIVIDUAL $15.00/YR
Family $20.00

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL:

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