

# MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

January 2021

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

Like many of you, I had some time off around the holidays, but it looked very different from years past. Traditions our family held dear were forgone in consideration of the pandemic, and we had to come up with new ways to do things. Rather than visiting extended family for meals, we ordered in, and spent quiet nights at home.

While activities looked different, they were also the same: community, leisure, education, and fun. Heading into 2021, I think the same is bound to be true for the Medina Historical Society. However until it is safe for us to meet in person again, we're going to continue finding ways to provide meaningful historical experiences to our members in new and innovative ways. Along the way, we'll no doubt create new traditions, but we can't wait to get back to the old ones too.

While the benefits might look different these days, your membership is so important, as it helps us to promote the stories that make Medina home, and it shows that you value our shared past. I would like to thank you all for your continued support of the Society, and we hope you will continue to take part in the Society's events and activities.

Sincerely,

*Reinhard Rogowski*

*President, Medina Historical Society*

rrogowski@rochester.rr.com – 585-317-7457



Elections Of The Past

Horse And Buggy Doctors Of Early Orleans Recalled

Holland Land Company Christmas

## ELECTIONS OF THE PAST

By Russell J. Waldo

Originally Published on November 6, 1941

Few in Medina today can appreciate the modification of elections during the past half-century or more. When Alaxander Coon and Seymour Murdock arrived in what is now western Orleans County it was designated as the Town of Batavia and those sturdy men if they chose to vote were required to walk or go on horseback to Batavia.

Alaxander Coon rode his horse to Batavia in 1812 to vote. He left home the day before the election and remained there two nights, learning the result of the Batavia vote before returning home. It was two weeks before he was able to know who had been elected. In this instance it was nearly Christmas before the fact became known that James Madison and William Crawford had been chosen.

When Lathrop A.G.B. Grant (first elected assemblyman from the newly organized Orleans County) was elected in 1826 it required only two days to learn the result within the county. The principle voting center outside of Medina was Barnagat (Shelby Center) and Newport (Albion). Canal packets brought the news to Medina. Assemblyman Grant, later prominent in the milling industry in both Shelby Center and Medina, did some personal campaigning and was able to call in person at every cabin and Alaxander Coon reported that he did.

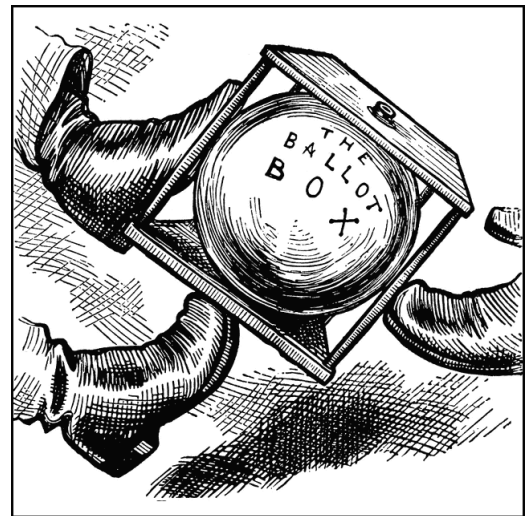
Beyond that there was little lengthy speechmaking until Silas M. Burroughs entered the race for assemblyman in 1837. There were three towns in Western Orleans County. Ridgeway had been set off from the Town of Batavia in 1812. Shelby had been set off from the Town of Ridgeway in 1818 and Yates was set off from Ridgeway in 1822.

Oliver Booth was the first supervisor elected from the Town of Ridgeway. He was elected in 1813. Samuel Clark served the next year. Lathrop A.G.B. Grant was elected supervisor for the Town of Shelby in 1826. He served five different years before 1850. Dr. Christopher Whaley served during the next two years 1827-28. Those are the first two supervisors for the Town of Shelby after organization.

After the completion of the canal, Sylvanus Coon's store was the focal point on evenings after an election to hear the latest news from outside. Moore's Tavern upon Shelby Street benefited from these interested citizens who remained overnight in many instances to learn later news before leaving for their homes.

The campaign where Abraham Lincoln was elected has been conceded to be the first rousing campaign of the area. Older grandparents have passed the word along of huge bonfires and drawn out speaker with the attending drunkenness and crowded calaboooses. This meant a busy morning for the judges of the day.

The election of 1884 brought serious charges against P.G. Wahams, manager of the Western Union Telegraph office. The complaints declared that he had "tinkered" with the figures he received to present the desired picture. The argument continued for some time after election.



The political campaign of 1896 was closed in Medina with a huge parade and mass meeting of the advocates of bi-metalism as opposed to the gold standard. Congressman Rockwell of Elmira came to Medina and delivered a stirring address at Bent's Opera House. An overflow crowd required his speaking a second time.

The two weeks proceeding, invitations were sent out for a radius of fifteen miles urging residents of Niagara, Genesee, and Orleans Counties to join in the big parade and mass meeting. Every available sleeping space was taken the night of November 2. The police bagged six pickpockets who had succeeded in enriching their own pockets. Police were successful in securing the return of nearly five hundred dollars from the robbers.

The parade formed at one o'clock sharp with Mayor Henry M. Starr of Medina as grand marshal. Deputy Marshals were appointed to take charge and arrange for full attendance from the various localities. The various localities were urged to solicit the full attendance from their localities without supervision.

The deputies included from Shelby, Dr. H. L. James; East Shelby, A.D. Grinnell; West Shelby, Albert H. Poler; Millville, W. G. Hill; West Barre, George Crane; Alabama, John Tulmulty; Middleport, W.B. Hoyt; Shelby Basin, John LaValley; Jeddo, Charl Pseaynai; Charles Payne; Johnsons Creek, John L. Chase; Ridgeway, Henry Beck; Oak Orchard, G.B. Merrill; Knowlesville, E.E. Woodford; Eagle Harbor, William Putt; Lyndonville, Dr. D. S. Fraser; Yates Center, Archibald Paul; Waterport, A.M. Ives; Carleton, George G. Welch; Millers, Edgar D. Miller; Kenyonville, W. H. Peinhardt; and Kuckville, Frank Warner.

Four grand division marshals had charge of the parade under the grand marshal. Division marshal was R.B. Wright from the north, Albert H. Poler from the south, Eugene E. Woodford from the east, and John LaValley from the west.

The feature of the parade was a cavalry division containing young men on horseback. Next came decorated wagons containing flags, streamers, campaign mottos, etc. Next came decorated carriages and buggies.

Medina as host provided the local bands. All other localities were asked to furnish bands as far as possible.

At the close of the parade the speaking started and continued throughout the remainder of the afternoon and evening.

Leroy Skinner was in charge of the information bureau both before the eventful day and upon the given day. Among the committee members were found James A. Hanlen, John J. Ryan, Warren Ensign, James M. Frary, William O. Holdridge, C. A. Corman, M. A. Bowen, J. D. Brennan, H. G. Spoor, S. A. Cook, G. L. Tinkman, G. A. Bowen, Michael Slack, C.A. Mack, R. W. Nichol, and G. M. Frary.

This event went down in history as one of the outstanding election parades and mass meeting of the village's history.

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# HORSE AND BUGGY DOCTORS OF EARLY ORLEANS RECALLED

By Russell J. Waldo

Originally Published on February 5, 1941

The life of a physician in pioneer Orleans County differs from the modern life. It presented hardships not to be encountered with the modern highway and the automobile. Pioneer Orleans County surrounded with its miles of dense woods, to say the least, did not offer any recreational inducements to the early physician and little money. In 1800, Boston was the center of medical training and few physicians could be induced to leave the social life of the seaboard for the backwoods practice.

Roads of the Hudson Valley and eastward to the Atlantic were much to be desired over the backwoods trails passable only to the horse for lengthy trips. During the early days of Orleans County there were none even within the area comprising Orleans or even Genesee Counties who would undertake the study of medicine with any hope of making a living from their education in the woods. The money required for training was not to be had. The distance to the schools made it almost impossible.

About the time Orleans County was being settled the State of New York passed a law making it unlawful for uneducated persons to practice medicine. The law was to the point concerning who could practice medicine and that prevented many a young man from taking up the study. Prior to that time, young men could enter the office of a practicing physician and after three or four years leave as a full fledged practitioner. This existed largely because there were none to fill the doctor's shoes rather than ability as a physician.



Records of physicians are fragmentary and the only reliable data comes from bits here and there and from old diaries of grand and great grandparents.

Dr. Christopher Whaley was one of the first, if not the first, doctor to locate in what is now Medina. He was born in Connecticut on June 16, 1798. He moved to Verona with his parents and studied for medicine at Fairfield, N.Y. It was there he graduated in 1819.

In September of the same year he located at Shelby Center. That was the village, not Medina at that time. Shelby was the hub of business at the time and he remained until 1832 dispensing medicine to ailing settlers far and near. Those who did go to him from Medina did not consider the distance to their doctor far. They were hardy people and were accustomed to walking even greater distances.

One narrative passed along with the generations says, that upon one of the coldest nights in February, 1828, a settler north of Medina, somewhere around the Salt Works, went to his office through a blinding snowstorm seeking medical aid for his mother who was in a critical condition. Besides his mother, there were two other neighbors lying at death's door. The doctor gave his wife instruction as what should be done in other cases and departed at 11 o'clock at night on horseback for his three patients.

He arrived there well after midnight and attended to the three after which he took a short nap before returning to Shelby Center, then known as Barnagat. On his return to Barnagat the next morning he called in to visit six other very ill people. He passed three homes in which death has visited since he went north after midnight.

This is but one of the scores of other similar instances. Settlers hesitated to call a physician because of the lack of money but Dr. Whaley was not that type of physician. He made it known that he wouldn't allow any one to die if he could be reached and he could save them. He was kept so busy with the sick that he never found time to cultivate the soil for crops yet there was no need of worry on that score as settlers kept him supplied with food, game and tanned furs for clothing besides bringing back needed items from Batavia whenever they went there.

Even after he moved his office to Medina, he received a large portion of his fees in foodstuffs. He sold much of this to the cities after the canal was opened and thereby reimbursed himself financially and was able to purchase needed supplies.

Dr. Horace Phippany was another early physician. He was born in Hindsburg, Vt., February 9, 1800. He first learned the shoemaker's trade but later started practice with Dr. Whaley in Medina. This was about 1821. Later he started practice with his uncle Dr. Richard Gates of Medina. He taught school to help defray expenses of living. In 1827 he moved to Lyndonville and then he set up a shoe repair outfit in his home to help mend the needs of the purse.

Dr. Abiel Bowen, born at Guilford, Vt. in 1798 came to Medina up the Erie Canal upon one of the first packets which he could find room for passage. His practice included Middleport and later he studied at Fairfield College. He purchased a farm at West Shelby in 1828. His four sons later became lawyers and dentists in Medina.

His diary was filled with notes of the early physician's trials and hardships. He was seldom ever able to get to the field for work without being called to attend the sick. Often times the man who called him would go to his field and work for him until he returned or come back and work the next day instead of paying him in money. Many times the boys would go to the field to call their father and bring the horses in while their father left direct from the field to attend the sick, often going across the fields.

Indian trails, often six or more inches deep, were filled with water after heavy rains. The trails through the dense woods were often impassible except on horseback. Upon these trips the physician's feet would be soaked through by splashing water.

When the first settlers arrived they depended upon their own resources for treatment. Later as the physicians entered the community they were called into practice more and more. The lack of proper food at first created many hardships and sicknesses although there was always a plentiful supply of wood for fuel.

A Doctor Rumsey came to Medina about 1827 although little can be learned of him. Shortly after that a Doctor Lanthrop came here but less can be learned of him. Dr. William White came to the section locating north of Medina near the salt works. It is believed he operated the salt works and lived about where the Elm Park residence is located.

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## 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.

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# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO: MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION AND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:

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



## **MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### **Officers 2021**

President: Reinhard Rogowski  
Vice President/Treasurer: Craig Lacy  
Secretary: Shane Sia  
Membership: Gail Miller  
Newsletter: Georgia Thomas

### **Other Board Members**

Catherine Cooper  
Barb Filipiak  
Cindy Robinson  
Kay VanNostrand

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**No in-person events scheduled due to  
COVID-19**

**The Board is considering options like  
outdoor meetings when the weather  
warms up, video lectures, etc.**

Thanks to Craig Lacy  
for providing articles in this issue!

***Historical Society website***  
**[www.HistoricMedina.org](http://www.HistoricMedina.org)**



MEDINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
406 WEST AVENUE  
MEDINA, NY 14103