

MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

April 2022

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

Spring is here, and as we approach the two year mark of the Covid pandemic, I think we are all more than ready to get back to normalcy and enjoy time with family and friends in our close-knit community. One of the positives in 2022 so far has been our well attended general meetings which included Show and Tell, Letters Alive and Eggstravaganza. Catherine Cooper has done a great job with these programs and I would like to thank her and everyone that attended and contributed.

As we look to the future, we hope you will join us in celebrating our love of Medina and its vibrant history, both past and present. We have so many ways for you to connect with us, whether it is by attending one of our events, becoming a member, visiting the museum on the first Saturday of the month, or joining us as a volunteer. We look forward to forging new connections and nurturing the old ones as we move onward and upward in 2022.

Also don't forget we have a variety ways of supporting the Medina Historical Society with a membership or a tax-deductible donation or a memorial fund in the memory of a loved one.

Have a great spring and remember:

Medina History. We're all a part of it!

Sincerely,

Reinhard Rogowski

President, Medina Historical Society

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DID YOU KNOW?

COL. EDWIN F. BROWN

1823-1903

Edwin F. Brown was born in a log cabin, grew up and was educated in Orleans County. Both Grandfathers were officers in the Revolution and his father a Captain during the War of 1812. Early on, Edwin helped in the construction of the expanded Erie Canal and later became toll collector and superintendent of the Buffalo to Rochester division.

In 1857, he moved to Medina and entered into business buying and shipping grain and produce. His family home was on Shelby Street (Main Street) just south of the Presbyterian Church. (Present location of Rosenkran's Pharmacy) He built the business block that would bear his name, the Brown Block, until it was razed by fire in 1907, which would clear the way for the construction of the new S. A. Cook Building. He was on his way to making a fortune in manufacturing baking powder with partners in Boston when war broke out.

Upon the commencement of the Civil War, Lt. Col. Brown went to war with the 28th NYS Infantry Volunteers and would participate in several important engagements including the capture of an entire rebel cavalry unit without the loss of a single man. However, it was during the battle of Cedar Mountain with Brown leading his troops through heavy fire resulting in a loss of 60% of those under his command, that he was severely wounded resulting in the amputation of his left arm. He subsequently became a prisoner in Richmond's Libby Prison being exchanged out in 1862. At home he served a term as Orleans county clerk before being appointed the Military Mayor of Vicksburg, MS. by President Grant where his policies soon won the hearts of southerners and became a matter of record in Washington.

Before the end of the conflict, Congress passed legislation establishing the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers and Seamen, the purpose of which was to provide a place where disabled veterans could live in an atmosphere which would benefit their health and contentment. It would be one of last bills signed by President Lincoln. There were the Eastern, Central and Western branches. The Central Branch was located on 700 acres in Dayton, Ohio and commenced operation in 1867.

It was in Dayton on October 8, 1868, that Col. Brown was commissioned as Acting Deputy Governor (Superintendent) of the home and appointed Governor in 1873. He served in this capacity for 12 years during which he oversaw extensive expansion of the home and grounds. Such was his record of achievement in Dayton that in 1880 he was made Inspector General of all National Soldiers Homes and would go on to oversee the building of 4 additional homes across the country. He would serve in this capacity for another 22 years until his death at the age of 81 while still attending to his duties as Inspector General. It was in his honor that when a new \$2,000,000, 900 bed hospital was added to the Dayton home in 1930, it was named The Col. Edwin F. Brown Hospital which is still very active today. ◆



It was said that Col. Brown was a "big man- mentally and physically; a friend in need. Always kind, just, sympathetic, genial and generous; and his life and works are a model of American citizenship, ability, integrity and patriotism."

Col. Brown would always regard Medina as his home.

Medina Historical Society marking 50th anniversary

BY CATHERINE COOPER
Contributor

MEDINA — On November 30, 1971, a group of 20 people attended a meeting at Oak Orchard School and officially organized the foundation of the Medina Historical Society.

Ciel White, Village of Medina historian, was named president, with Miss Margaret Shannon as president-elect, Clifford Wise as vice president, Miss Marian Perry as secretary and Frank Berger as treasurer. A constitution was adopted.

The purpose of the newly formed society was to: "discover, procure and preserve whatever may relate to the history of Western New York and particularly the Village of Medina and Townships of Ridgeway and Shelby, to gather statistics of commerce, manufacture and business, publish reports, essays and other historical material, maintain lectures and studies, engage speakers, raise funds, buy or lease property or construct buildings for future historical society uses, and other related activities."

The society can justly be proud of its steady accomplishments over the past 50 years. Following sev-

eral years of fund raising and searching for a suitable location, the society achieved its long-term goal of securing a building for a museum in 1979, when members reached an agreement with the Town of Ridgeway for the use of 406 West Ave. This sturdy red brick building built in 1841 by LeVan Merritt had been used as offices by the Town of Ridgeway since 1960.

Board members and volunteers worked to renovate the building. Members of the community generously donated cherished items. The Monitor clock in the entryway belonged to Ciel White, as did two glass lamps. The Victorian furniture in the parlor was given by Louise Brownell. The Estey parlor organ has Shelby connections. The G.E. refrigerator and

early stove were donated by Ward Bramer. Agricultural tools, a wooden sewer pipe, a World War II POW bed, military uniforms, the list goes on. The most recent donation is a voting booth from Medina Central School District. Indeed, each item in the collection has a local connection and resonance.

In addition to establishing a fine museum and hosting visits and group tours, the society also began a quarterly publication, *The Bugle*, which features articles on topics of local interest. Annual calendars showcasing some of the collection's unique photographs have helped raise funds.

The society has presented a varied slate of programs each spring and fall.

Recent offerings include the Orphan Trains and the History of Polio. Character reenactors have brought Mary Jemison, Surly Sal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to life. The January "Show and Tell" is an annual favorite.

Members have organized elaborate Old Home Days with artisans demonstrating traditional skills such as weaving and chair caning. The "stone soup," cooked over an open fire on that day, was always popular. Fashion shows, wedding dress galas, parades, floats, afternoon teas, Victorian mourning customs, and Santa Claus are some of the imaginative events presented.

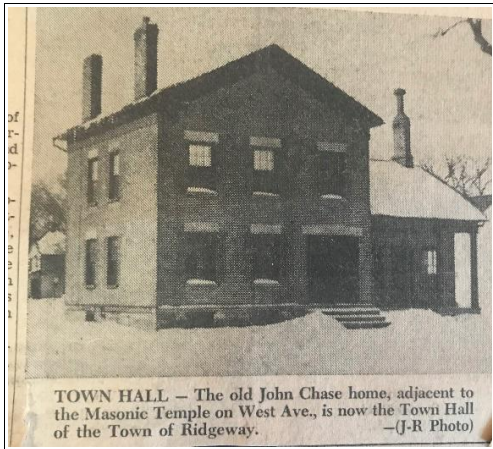
This wealth of activity was all organized, promoted and provided by volunteers. The yearly membership in 1971 was \$2. Fifty years later, it is a modest \$15. Residents of the Village of Medina, the townships of Ridgeway and Shelby have been well served for 50 years by the dedication of the Medina Historical Society and its stewardship of their memories.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY PAST PREIDENT'S

(compiled by Frank Berger)

1971-72	Cecilia A. White
1973	Frank Berger
1974	Joseph Szczechowiak
1975	Inez Metz
1976-77	Michael Callara
1978-79	Dorothy Corlis
1980-82	Gerald Mullen
1983-85	John Wasnock
1986-89	Marian Perry
1990-91	Alice Zacher
1992	John Wasnock
1993-94	Shirley Nellist
1995	Richard Nellist
1996-98	John Wasnock
1999-2000	Carol Wasnock
2001-2003	Craig Lacy
2004-2006	Todd Bensley
2007	Nancy W. Berger
2008	Adam Tabelski
2009-2010	Catherine Cooper
2011	Cindy Robinson
2012-2022	Reinhard Rogowski

CLOSE CALL



According to a Medina Journal-Register article from Feb. 1, 1961, the fate of our Museum building was once in jeopardy.

The sturdy brick structure at 406 West Ave. was built by Levan Merritt in 1841 and was the home of his descendant Lula Chase and her husband, John, for many years.

Mrs. Chase died in 1958 and the Village of Medina bought the property from the Chase estate:

“And had held it with a possible plan to remove it for a parking lot”

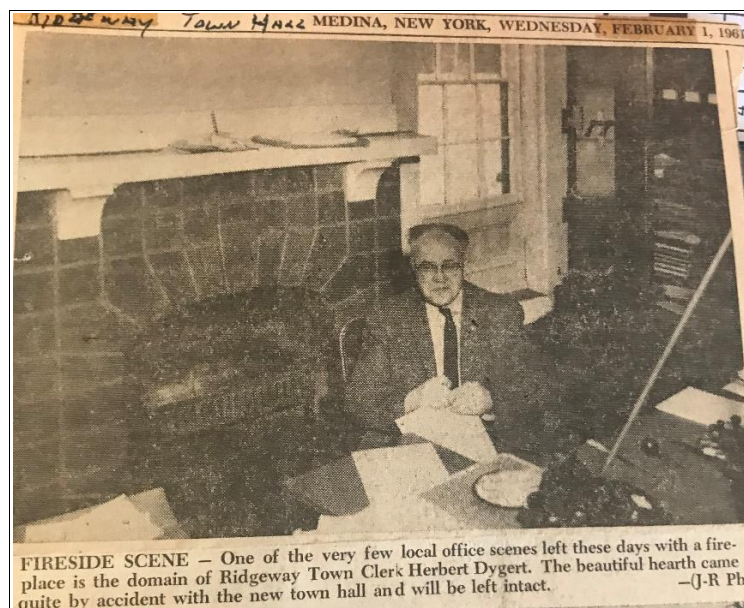
However, The Town of Ridgeway purchased it in 1961 for \$13,000 as the location for their new Town Hall.

“Three stately glazed brick fireplaces will remain intact, if unused, and the township has done a minimum remodeling project to put the place in shape for occupancy”

The installation of a blacktop driveway which encircled the building necessitated the removal of old trees and vines which had made the home a secluded haven.

William Knights was the Ridgeway Supervisor at that time, the Town Clerk was Herbert Dygert, Highway Supt.: Fred Roth, Jr., Justices of the Peace: Lyman Holman and James Anderson, Zoning Enforcement Officer: Bertram Flynn, Councilmen: Fred Bell and Frank Botsford and Welfare Officer: Mrs. Elmer Meister.

By 1979, the Town of Ridgeway had outgrown the space and built a new facility at the rear of the property. An agreement between the Town of Ridgeway and the Village of Medina transferred the lease of 406 West Ave. to the Medina Historical Society with the stipulation that the Society maintain and preserve the building. ◆



FIRESIDE SCENE – One of the very few local office scenes left these days with a fireplace is the domain of Ridgeway Town Clerk Herbert Dygert. The beautiful hearth came quite by accident with the new town hall and will be left intact. —J-R Ph

THE HISTORY OF BENT'S BLOCK

Part 2

Originally Published on February 17, 1954

Excerpts from MEDINA'S HITCHING POST DAYS by Russell J. Waldo

Arrival of Rev. Savage

It was about the time of these first meetings that the Rev. Eleazer Savage, born in Middletown, Conn., July 1800, graduated in the first graduating class of the Hamilton Theological Seminary, and was taking a trip through New York State to Buffalo, where he hoped to secure a permanent pastorate.

He stopped at the home of Mr. Bates south of the Ridge and after a few days there came on to Medina where he favored the people with preaching during the few days of his intended stop. The Rev. Savage did not leave Medina and was induced to remain as a minister of the flock. He lived in the house located in the approximate area of the west half of Bent's Block.

Savage had not been long in Medina, according to his statement shortly before his death in 1886, when a man called at his home. The man was wretched and he confided in this minister of a life of sin and asked advice. This was Charles Eaton. He was encouraged to remain with the minister while he rested up and during that time he was drawn into a useful life in the village, became thrifty and became a student in religious activity. He was one of eight men the Rev. Mr. Savage converted who became ministers. During his short ministry to the "People of the Woods" he converted 157 people. On pleasant Sunday afternoons the services would be conducted in the front yard of the Rev. Mr. Savage's home. (About Armstrong's and Grant's space).

Baptists Acquire Property

Mr. Stanton transferred the property to Lyman Bates in 1831 after which Mr. Bates transferred it to the trustees of the Baptist Church. Plans were immediately launched for the building of a permanent church upon the ground to the west of Bent's Block. (There will be more details of this in the Baptist History later.)

During the political campaign of John Tyler, assemblyman who in 1831 lived in Yates, a meeting of citizens was held at this corner and listened to his two hour discussion of a political program. It was at this location that the few townspeople provided a big lunch for the people who had gathered there. John Kilner stopped in Shelby Center and brought Andrew Ellicott along to hear Tyler.

The year 1850 found a Jacob Kipp occupying a building upon the east portion of the plot and a Tribune paragraph referred to Kipp's line of yard goods and general merchandise. He said in another paragraph that "he accepted butter and eggs in exchange for merchandise."

The year 1851 found Henry Ferguson located in this building, a frame structure. He was a brother of John Ferguson who manufactured boots and shoes. Soon after that there was a small fire in this frame building and the loss was slight. Later he was found in the Brown Block where he was engaged in leather goods and manufacturer. There was a plank sidewalk in front of this building in 1858 when Mr. Weaver broke through the walk and injured his foot keeping him inside for many days.

Continued next page

Don Bent Purchases Property

Don Bent purchased the building April 12, 1854 and leased it until on the night of Oct. 7, 1863 when a fire broke out and burned the structure to the ground. The Rev. David VanAlstyne, then Baptist pastor, lived next to the church when he came in 1858. After the fire in 1863 he was reported making his home on West Avenue which would indicate that the home, which had been the parsonage of the Rev. Savage, burned with the frame building.

Present Building Started

Work was started upon a three story stone building the following spring and on Feb. 9, 1865 the Bent's Building was dedicated. The third floor came to be used for, not only meetings, but traveling shows. This induced Bent to convert the third floor into Bent's Opera House which was formally opened to the public on Nov. 9, 1873. (There will be more about the Opera House in a separate feature.)

About this time "Dock" Hawkins conducted a restaurant in the basement of the building which exists today. This had an iron ornamental railing around it. Many oldsters of a couple of decades ago recall the portly gentleman with his big pan and stick, high hat and black tail coat as he mounted to the top of these steps and beat the pan as a signal that the noon dinner was served for only twenty-five cents for the meal of separate dishes as cheap as five cents each.

The builders of Bent's Block were John Parsons and John Ryan. The carpenters included W. E. Waldron and Wesley Snell who were in partnership

Don Bent died July 3, 1875 at the age of 62 years and the property remained in the name of the family for many years. Albert L. Swett at one time owned the building and made plans for providing an entrance in the corner and a lobby with an elevator. His plans called for a fourth floor. The whole structure was to be used for offices upon three upper floors. This did not materialize as conditions did not warrant the venture. It was sold to Buffalo interests from whom Sanderson Ross purchased it. His widow is the present owner.

The building has the distinction of being the first building in Medina to have a tar and gravel roof. This was put on in 1885 amid strenuous advice from builders that it was a foolish venture and most impractical.

With the exception of the removal of the balconies and repointing of the outside walls the building is much the same as it was originally built some 90 years ago. ◆

The building was largely underutilized the second half of the 20th Century and was in danger of collapse in the early 21st Century. The Orleans Renaissance Group worked to initially stabilize the structure.

Talis Equity Inc. of Medina then purchased the building and took on one of the community's most ambitious restoration projects, working over three years to have the building fortified and redesigned to include a restaurant, hotel, and entertainment/lecture hall. A remarkable transformation was accomplished, and the newly refurbished building was opened again in 2021, restoring it to its former luster.



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 2022

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

Held at the Lee-Whedon Library (620 West Ave.)
All programs begin at 7:00 pm

**April 25 – “Survival Skills of Early
America”**

**June 4 – Wedding Gown display at the
Museum**

June 6 – Historical Society picnic

**Museum will be open to the public from
10-1 the first Saturday of each month**

Thanks to Craig Lacy, Catherine Cooper
Frank Berger and Dave Miller for the
articles in this issue!

Historical Society website
www.HistoricMedina.org