

MEDINA BUGLE

A Publication of the Medina Historical Society

January 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

Happy New Year to our community and all our members and supporters. As we begin our 52nd year serving the citizens of the Village of Medina and the townships of Shelby and Ridgeway I can look back at the history of the Medina Historical Society with pride. It is remarkable what our founders did to create this fine organization and it is an honor to continue to maintain our building at 406 West Ave. Our museum is constantly changing, and this coming year will be no exception. We continue to make needed repairs and update our exhibits with new items.

During 2022 we reached out to our members to renew their membership's dues and are grateful for the response. Many of our members not only continue to renew their individual or family dues but also made additional contributions, your continued support is appreciated and the board and I will continue to make sure the history of our area is preserved.

Of course we will still need your support in 2023 with your membership and donations. Your contributions are not just a gift to charity but an investment in the community that will protect, preserve and promote our local history.

Thank you,

Reinhard Rogowski

President, Medina Historical Society

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



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DID YOU KNOW?

MEDINA'S BIRTHDAY

Did you know Spring is Medina's Birthday!

MARCH 3, 1832, Medina was incorporated.

On May 1st in the public house of John Cobb – well it was sort of hotel built out of an old canal workers building on the docks. There was a small room on the ground floor where groceries and general merchandise were sold and a large room that was a dining room that was used for public meetings. It was in this room that the first municipal government of Medina was formed.

The first trustees of Medina were:

Justus Ingersoll, Nathan Sawyer, Asahel Woodruff, James C. Evans and Hasted H. Parker. First clerk was Henry Phelps who was later succeeded by Henry Yerrington.

Since I love cake I think I will have to make a birthday cake on March 3 to celebrate, I think chocolate with chocolate icing is called for! So join me this March 3rd and have a birthday party in your home in honor of our town! ◆

WHY MEDINA GREW

Medina Historical Society and Museum have many dedicated people that keep our history as a town "alive." One of those people was Russell J. Waldo who was a Medina Historian and newspaper writer with our former Medina Journal-Register from 1941 to 1960.

The Medina Historical Society published his writings called the "Hitching Post Days" in two volumes.

I would like to share with you one I found most interesting because as we are still in the Bicentennial of the Erie Canal, I found this most interesting for we who live in Medina.

Did you know that the canal wasn't originally going to go through Medina?

Well, I shall quote from Mr. Waldo's article....

"At this time the survey of the canal was laid out and the original plans placed the waterway through what is now Shelby Center. The survey plotted the canal through lands owned by Joseph Ellicott who had received a vast acreage at Shelby Center, now the Forrestel Farm and extending south. Ellicott objected strenuously at having his lands cut in two by the ditch and made his objections known to the proper authorities in Albany.

The result was that the surveyors returned to Lockport and laid out a new canal line through what would be Medina. It took advantage of the low sections which would provide a use for the excavated dirt and rocks in the building of the canal."

With that change Medina grew while Shelby Center.... well, you who live here can see the results. ◆

MEDINA STREETS AND THEIR NAMING

By Russell J. Waldo,
Village Historian

Originally Published August 23, 1955

Salt Works Road, Highland Ave.... many of our street names have interesting origins. Russell Waldo wrote the following article on the origins of Medina's street names. We reprint it here, having highlighted the street names for easier browsing. We also include updated location information wherever possible; these notes are in italics.

So many requests have been received concerning Medina's streets and their naming that notes gathered from issues of early Medina newspapers, maps and from older residents have been brought together for the benefit of those inquiries. Many missing links have been found and it is hoped that these missing bits of information can be had from those who possess the information.

The first map of the area included within the boundaries of Western Orleans County and Medina is one drawn by Joseph Ellicott made following his survey of the Holland Land Purchase in the late 1700's. This shows an Indian trail leading from the Lewiston Trail to Point Breeze. This trail followed the west bank of Oak Orchard Creek and was shown as the **Oak Orchard Trail**. This trail was largely used by the Indians as they passed through the area.

Also, coming from the southwest and joining with Oak Orchard Trail at a point near the home of George Goldsmith, **North Gravel Road** was a path used by the Indians and the early white people who visited the salt springs near Old Elm Park. This accounted for the naming of the trail **Salt Works Trail**. This trail was used for many years after the coming of the settlers and crossed the location of the Barge Canal. The opening of the canal discontinued this trail between **West Center Street** and the curve at the old Watson farms [*now The Gallagher, 255 North Gravel Rd.*]

Settlement of Ellicott's Mills [*Andrew Ellicott's mill, Shelby Center, per Grinnell book, p.13*] shifted the thoroughfare through Medina to higher ground and a road was opened turning away from the old trail at the foot of **McKnight's Hill** through what is now **Main St.**, Medina, to **North Gravel Road** connecting **North Gravel Road** at the village limits. The first name given to Medina's present **Main Street** was **Plank Road**. This is shown on the map of 1849 and started at a point near the present railroad and **Shelby Street** and continued north. **Plank Road** became **Shelby Street** just prior to the Civil War as soldiers were reported marching down **Shelby Street** to the railroad from Shelby Center. In the late 90's [*i.e. 1890's*], the name **Shelby Street** was changed to **Main Street** and the street renumbered.

No information can be found for the naming of **Orient Street** which was located west of the Oak Orchard Trail. **Church Street**, believed to be the second side street to be opened in Medina, was laid out after St. Luke's Church (*now St. John's*) was built and at first passed only on the west side of the church. A cabin stood very near the church to the east which burned in the middle 30's [*1830's*]. This was of questionable origin and never rebuilt. Soon after the street was laid out east of the church.

A street laid out on the present **Center Street**, according to Chandler Ellicott, was known as, but not named, **Center Street** until after **Park Avenue** was laid out. **Park Avenue** was originally named **Mill Street** after the first mill built by David Evans was opened back of the present Rignel store *site [Rignel's Feed Store, 601 Main St.]* **Mill Street** remained the name through many maps and directories until 1895 when it was listed as **Park Avenue**. The only plausible reason* for the name **Park Avenue** is the fact that where the present Ward Service Station is located (*121 Park Ave., currently a vacant lot*) was a wooded area.

(*Another theory is that **Park Ave.** was named for the driving park located at the west end of the street on **Salt Works Road**)

About the time **Mill Street** was laid out, the name Center was given and divided as **East and West Center Street**. In 1848 this extended only to **Catherine Street** on the west and a little beyond State on the east.

Catherine Street originally passed between Howell apartments (321 West Center) and a farm barn upon the opposite side of the road.

One of the first streets used after the opening of the canal was listed as “**Warren’s Alley**” on the early maps. With the widening of the canal, at the foot of **Church Street**, several homes on the north side of the street were removed and soon after the name was changed to **Manila Place** with no reasons accounting for the name except the prominence of Manila during the Spanish- American War.

West Avenue was laid out very early in the village history. It extended from **Mill Street** to the present **Pearl Street**. The name was given because it was the on the west side of the village. This was connected with **Shelby Street** at the north end and by a street known as **Cross Street**. This continued for many years until the name was changed to **Pearl Street**.

About the time Cross Street was opened, a house stood in what is now **Main Street** at **Pearl Street**. The village fathers made plans for extending the business section of the village along the canal and laid plans for a street which would be known as **Commercial Street**. The house owned by Simeon Bathgate [1789-1865] stood in the path of the proposed street. A deal was made with Bathgate to move the house anywhere he wished, the first corner west was chosen by Bathgate, but his wife strenuously objected, without success, to moving her home so far out in the woods.

About this time, considerable gravel was being used on the road north of Medina, which changed the name to **North Gravel Road**. The name **South Gravel Road** was, for a very brief period, given to **Salt Works Road** south of **Center Street**. The name **Salt Works Road** was taken after the opening of **West Center Street** to that point around the fifties [i.e.1850s]. **West Center Street** had previously been a narrow road.

Oak Orchard Street was opened in the late forties [i.e. is1840s] and extended from **Orient Street** to a point a little west of **West Avenue**. **Gwinn Street** was opened near this dating and extended south to a line south of **Oak Orchard Street**. This was named by William Gwinn who owned a very large tract of land in that general section of Medina. It was Gwinn who built as his home the stone house now owned by Eddie Hess on **Park Avenue** [204 Park Avenue] and the first floor of the old arsenal back of the Walsh House.

With the opening of **Gwinn Street**, it was decided to open a cemetery on a high plot of ground on this street and the bodies, five or six of them, buried upon the east side of **West Avenue**, opposite the First Baptist Church, now the Gotts apartments [129 West Center Street], were removed to the new cemetery. It was this **West Center Street** plot where the first burial took place.

Not long after this, John Weld, according to Mrs. Emaline Kenan, built his home, which still stands. While the workmen were building this home, a white water pitcher was left on the basement wall one night. An inebriated man, too far under to recall that a cemetery had been located there, passed the corner and seeing the white water pitcher became frightened, believing it to be the skull of a departed person. He ran to the corner of Shelby and Center for the remainder of the night.

The map of 1857 shows **Evans Street** north of the Academy. The street south was Academy. The 1879-80 Directory lists **North and South Academy**, the street having been divided to accommodate the school. The name Evans was for David Evans who figured prominently locally in the early days and who owned considerable land in the village.

The same map shows **Hedley Street** extending east from **West Avenue** to the raceway parallel with **Main Street**. William Hedley had built the show place now owned by Dr. Kenneth Clark [1023 West Ave.] and H. Hedley had built a home some distance from **West Avenue**, south of the present **Highland Avenue**.

Highland Avenue, opened not many years after this, was at first known as **Warren Street**. Two explanations are given for this naming. One for Dr. Warren and the other Warren for Warren Ensign who built many homes on the street. It became **Highland** in the 90’s [i.e. 1890s]

The 1857 map shows nothing east of **Oak Orchard Street** and south of the railroad. This, as far as can be learned, was given over to farmers who entered their lands from **Bates Road**, which was a country road named for Lyman Bates, an early settler. **Bates Road** was connected by an unnamed road with **East Center Street**. ♦

CANVASS WHITE

The Erie Canal was known as “Clinton’s Ditch” and many laughed at it. But it helped make our nation great and New York is known as the Empire State for that “ditch” helped build an empire.

Many men built that “ditch” and one I find interesting is Canvass White.

Canvass White was born September 8, 1790, in Oneida County, NY.

He was a young engineer in 1817. He was helping to build the canal when in the Fall of 1817 Benjamin Wright, senior engineer, sent Canvass to England. Canvass was to observe the canals of Great Britain. He did!

Canvass walked over 2,000 miles, bought modern surveying instruments, and gained as much knowledge as he could of canal construction. He made detailed drawing of locks and construction methods and gained valuable information. The packet boats we had on our canal came from one of his sketches.

The locks had to be built of stone as wood would rot but the problem was that the cement we had was as useful as bubble gum. While Europe had cement that worked under water we didn’t and importing it was too high a cost.

Canvass while working on the canal found the solution! It was right in the canal’s path at Chittenango. It was a lime rock deposit that a very strong cement could be made from and it was waterproof. Canvass never received the monetary reward for his discovery and formula for hydraulic cement. He got a “pat on the back” but he never made money on his work.

There are many unsung hero’s of the canal some we may never know but we need to honor them for making a dream come true and building a nation. ◆

Richard “Dick” Nellist passed away on December 4, 2022 at the age of 93.

Dick served as the Town of Ridgeway Historian for twenty years. He had a keen grasp of local history and of local history resources. He was dogged in pursuit of answers to the queries he received and would painstakingly trawl through microfilm issues of the local newspapers in search of relevant information. He was generous in sharing his knowledge, and always gentlemanly in demeanor.

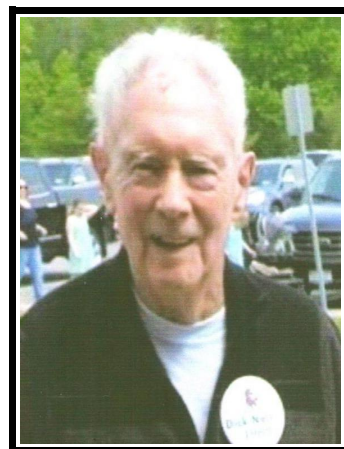
Dick and his wife, Shirley, were both active and dedicated members of the Medina Historical Society from its inception. They served on the Board of Trustees and were involved in all aspects of the Museum operation. They helped catalog and organize the collection. They were involved with the popular Old Home Days events. Dick submitted articles for The Bugle. He enjoyed conducting tours of the Museum for fourth-grade students for many years.

Dick and Shirley were recognized as “Orleans County Heritage Heroes” in 2017 for their contribution to the historical record of the Town of Ridgeway. They prepared accurate and detailed listings of the eleven cemeteries in the Town of Ridgeway, over 11,000 burials all told, a painstaking and time-consuming project. These records are accessible online and are invaluable for genealogical research (www.orleansgenweb.net).

Our sympathy to his son, Greg, and family.

In Memory of
Richard H. Nellist

Oct. 5, 1929 – Dec. 4, 2022



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 2023

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

January 30 “Show and Tell”
February 27 “Letters Alive!”
March 27 “Groovy 70's”
April 24 Orleans County
Geneology website
June ?? Members Tea - TBD

Thanks to Catherine Cooper and Georgia Thomas
for the articles in this issue!

Historical Society website
www.HistoricMedina.org