



# MARCELLUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 7, Issue 2

Spring 2002

## THE OLD VILLAGE SCHOOL

Submitted by John Curtin

Two interesting newspaper articles appeared in *The Marcellus Observer* in 1935 featuring the Old Village School, that was located on South (Cherry) Street in what is today the parking lot of St. Francis Xavier Church. The school was torn down in 1935 after serving the community of Marcellus since its construction in 1840. The picture below is from the files of the Historical Society.



*The Marcellus Observer, Wednesday, June 12, 1935*

### OLD MARCELLUS SCHOOL BEING TORN DOWN

**Hall of Learning, Where Many Local Residents  
Pondered Over The Three R's, Under Wrecker's  
Tools. Built 95 Years Ago.**

Older residents are viewing with a feeling of sadness, the dismantling of the old Union School at Marcellus, the property having recently been sold to St. Francis Xavier Church Society.

The building is one of the old landmarks of Marcellus. Built in 1840, the upright frame is still sturdy but the floor joists and sills are decaying. The

name of the building is not known. There are a few of the older residents who believe the old school was built by Mr. Sayre, while others claim that Mr. Sayre did not live here at that time. He built the Presbyterian Church in 1851.

In 1892 the school was closed, the present schoolhouse having been completed. It was then purchased by William Gallup who in turn sold it to George Helganz, who ran the Alhambra Saloon there until the enactment of the 18th amendment.

D.D.F. Coon, one of our oldest residents, while reminiscing at the scene, took the writer to the room at the north end of the building.

"This," said Mr. Coon, "is the room where I started my schooling. I cannot recall the name of the teacher but she lived in what is now the Ed Rosser home." Mr. Coon told how, when he had broken some little schoolroom rule, he was made to pick up a quantity of beans from the floor. When the beans were retrieved the teacher dumped them over Mr. Coon's head and forced him to pick them up a second time.

In a few years the old schoolhouse will be completely forgotten. It has gone the way of other old landmarks which are now nothing but history. Thanks to some early residents the stories surrounding some of the old buildings have been chronicled, but there are a great many which have vanished without even a written word to show their location to posterity.

There is a crying need in Marcellus for someone to take up the task where the late Dr. Parsons left off in his valuable book, and to pen the story of the village and town down to the present day. ~

(See Page 3 for second article)

### In Remembrance

David Mealy - Dec 2, 2001

Marjorie L. Seeley - March 5, 2002

Sarah Welsh - March 9, 2002

Lucy M. Sweet - April 3, 2002

Lovilla A. Plumpton - April 20, 2002 ~

## EVENTS SCHEDULE

*The tentative schedule of events is as follows:*

**Sunday, May 19, 2002.....2 p.m.**  
Peg Nolan will display many of the 45 scrapbooks from the museum for browsing.

**Saturday, June 1, 2002..... 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**  
**Museum Open House**

**Sunday, June 9, 2002.....2 p.m.**  
Peg Nolan will explain and display the various reference books that are available at the museum.

**No Meetings during July and August**

**September 8, 2002 .....2 p.m.**  
(To be announced)

*Meetings are open to anyone and are held at the Marcellus Fire Station unless indicated otherwise. A short business meeting will precede each program.*

### Historical Society Officers for 2002

President: Peg Nolan..... 673-1765  
E-mail: pegnolan@hotmail.com  
Vice President: Bruce Widger ..... 673-9142  
E-mail: DrBWWidger@aol.com  
Treasurer: Hollis Abbott..... 673-1753  
E-mail: habbott1@twcny.rr.com  
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John Curtin (2003)..... 673-3660  
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Mary Tuthill (2003) ..... 673-2990  
Tom Leonard (2004)..... 673-4273  
E-mail: TomLeonard35@msn.com  
(Open)(2004)

The Marcellus Historical Society,  
P.O. Box 165, Marcellus, NY 13108,  
publishes this newsletter and mails it quarterly  
to its members and advertisers.

### From The President ...

The winter months brought much progress for the museum. We have signed a lease with the village and

secured liability insurance to cover the museum. The new wiring, light fixtures and smoke alarms have been completed. John Curtin has installed four more windows bringing the total to twelve new windows replaced by the village and installed by John. The village has also insulated the ceilings and we hope to have air conditioners installed before summer. A stair chair has been ordered and will be ready before the June 1st Open House. John Curtin has painted all the window trim, doors and baseboards and we have installed new mini-blinds on the windows.

The pencil sketch drawing of the village by Margaret Parsons has been restored and is now at the museum. The work was done by West Lake Conservators of Skaneateles and was paid for by a grant secured for us by Senator John DeFrancisco. The cost of preserving the firemen's banner was estimated at over \$4500 which, due to its fragile condition, could only be stabilized and not fully restored. We decided that this was too much money to spend on one item and it has been wrapped by West Lake Conservators for storage.

Joyce Murphy and myself sorted many old clippings and have put together more scrapbooks. Over twenty five hundred obituaries have been put onto index cards and alphabetized for another resource. Work has been started on the Levi Parsons family letters, journals, sermons and other documents.

Volunteers are busy at the museum arranging, cleaning and organizing our collection. In the summer months we will be continuing to work on cataloging the collection.

Our **May meeting will be May 19th** at the Marcellus Fire Station instead of May 12th which is Mother's Day.

**Open House will be Saturday, June 1st** from 10 am until 3 pm and we will be **raffling off a hand-made afghan** from squares that came from Lucy Sweet's home and were put together by friends of the Grange. We thank the Grange ladies for this beautiful afghan.

*Beginning June 9th, the museum will be open on Sunday afternoons from 1 to 4 pm as well as Tuesday evenings from 7 to 9 pm.* Appointments can be made at other times by contacting myself, Hollis Abbott or Bruce Widger. Please come and join us when we are open - either to volunteer or to browse through Marcellus history.

A big **Thank You** to all who helped through the winter months to get so much done.

Peg Nolan ~

*The Marcellus Observer Wednesday, July 10, 1935*

### OLD HOLE IN FLOOR BRINGS BACK MEMORIES

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**Marcellus Octogenarian Recalls Episode Of  
Spinks Boys, As School is Dismantled. Three-  
Quarters Of Century Has Not Dimmed Memory  
Of Local Resident.**  
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An interesting story about the old Marcellus schoolhouse is told this week by D. D. F. Coon, a story that may be recalled by some of our old timers.

It seems that about 75 or 80 years ago Mr. Coon went to school with the Spinks boys. John and Isaiah Spinks sat together, while Page Spinks (father of Howard Spinks of Camillus) and Mr. Coon sat together a few seats away. John and Isaiah, the older boys, in early life took on the tobacco chewing habit and indulged in it during the school hours. These two boys attended school only in the fall and winter, their services being needed at home during the spring and summer. The teacher, Mrs. Avery, was somewhat "sot" against tobacco chewing among her pupils, so forbid John and Isaiah to spit on the floor.

One day at noon, the two older Spinks boys went to Wellington's shop nearby and borrowed a bit and brace. With this they bored a hole in the floor so as to have it midway between the two chewers. As the bit was being extracted from the hole, it came out of the bitstock and dropped down through to the ground beneath. Undaunted the lads borrowed a bar and took three stones out of the wall and crawled in and recovered the bit.

The hole in the wall was never filled up and for years the hold remained. When George Helganz took over the place he used this hole as the beginning of a door and dug out more stones and enlarged the opening.

When the wrecking crew began to tear up the top layer of flooring a few weeks ago Mr. Coon remembered the episode of the hole in the floor, enacted so many years ago. He told the story, and when the workmen reached the old original floor they found the round hole, just as Mr. Coon had told them.

The three Spinks boys are gone and the old days at Marcellus school are but a memory to the few who remain. Soon the school will be a memory also. The frame and rafters which once were the Hall of Learning are now part of a pile of old lumber waiting to be drawn away. ~

*The Marcellus Observer October 25, 1907*

### THE VILLAGE SMITHY ON EAST MAIN STREET MARCELLUS, NEW YORK

The old blacksmith shop being recently torn down from its generation of service at the foot of East Hill in Marcellus, has revived some history which may be of interest. There is something about a blacksmith shop which through all time has been connected with the way back history of any locality. Horse shoeing has always been a necessity, and is not superseded by any patented contrivances. The village blacksmith is a fixed character in town today, if not quite of so commanding a presence as to be sung in poetry.

The first we learn of this smith it was owned by a man named Wilder. He taught singing school to which the young folks came, and it is thought that he sang in the Methodist choir. This was about 60 years ago. Gray took the shop of him, the father of James and Robert Gray now living on West Hill. Fred Griffing's father succeeded Gray and later Fred took the shop until he went in partnership with James Pilot on North Street, abandoning the old shop, and now he has torn it down to make the site into a lawn in front of his home, the house standing back.

Other smiths who are spoken of in connection with the story are Carter who had the shop at Pigs Ear, and Truman Eggleston at Marcellus Falls. Roderick Smith also had a shop on North Street in front of the building now known as the Bee Hive and the shop has evolved into the present James Pilot shop, who at present conducts a modern shop on North Street which he built over last year. He bought this business, though, of Wm. Garnett, father of John, of Yahn and Garnett in Syracuse. Other latter day, or present day blacksmiths about here are Daniel Vinton, who assists Pilot, James Haster and his brother William, another one, George Wellington is busy at Wellington's Corners, Elijah H. Baker at Marietta, William Thorpe at the Falls, Bert Stevens has the shop at Camillus and Williams H. Davis is at Oswego Bitter, while the Knights work day time and nights, too, at Elbridge to care for a growing business.

Submitted by John Curtin ~

#### From the Observer - May 1909:

"Drinking Fountain for Man, Horse & Dog.  
Money solicited by the W.C.T.U." ~

## Renewed Members

*The following people have renewed their membership since our last newsletter (Patrons in bold print):*

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## Recent Acquisitions

*We wish to thank the following people for donating items to the museum collection:*

**Pierre & Mary Montague** for L.D. Paul Lumber Co. carpenter's apron and Mulroy Dairy milk bottle crate; **Bruce Block** for two Lucy Sweet photo albums; **Bob Wilson** for Fire Dept. uniform; **John Curtin** for June Frawley's "The Lawless Story"; **Mary Tuthill** for flags and notebooks; **Michael Plumpton** for items from Lucy Sweet's home including photos, history records, clothing, slide projector and record player. ~

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### **Program Presentation Thanks to:**

**Vince Murphy** for Video of the History of our Flag given on March 10th.

**Bruce Widger** for Slide presentation from Stanley Munro's collection of local scenes and flowers given on April 14th. ~

**Marcellus Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 165**  
**Marcellus, NY 13108**

Non-Profit Organization  
 U. S. Postage Paid  
 Marcellus, NY 13108  
 Permit Number 18

**May meeting changed to May 19th**  
**Open House June 1st 10 am to 3 pm**

**INSIDE:**

- \* *The Old Village School*
- \* *Progress at the Museum*
- \* *Afghan raffle*
- \* *The Village Smithy*

(The date on the label is the  
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