



MARCELLUS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 11, Issue 1

Winter 2006



Robert Earl Baker 1893-1975

Robert Earl Baker was born in 1893 in the house at 12 North Street, the only child of Dwight C. Baker (1856-1941) and Julia Spinks Baker (1857-1922). His father, a wagon maker, had built the house and barn in 1885 and operated his business from the barn (see picture on page 3). The house in later years became the home of Joe and Kate Norman.

Robert's great-great-grandfather was Ezekiel Baker (1764-1842), a Revolutionary War Veteran, who came to Marcellus from Pelham, Massachusetts in about 1803. Ezekiel's brothers: James, Lewis, John and Benjamin, also settled in Marcellus in the early 1800's. Robert Earl was a distant cousin of Robert M. Baker who owned the dam and mill on the east side of the village. Robert M. Baker (1847-1925) was the son of Benjamin Russell Baker (c1826-1897) and grandson of Benjamin Baker (1778-1864).

An interesting note about Dwight Baker and his

brother, Cory Baker, who died within two days of each other in 1941: the obituary gave their great grandfather as Lewis Baker - an error apparently copied from a 1934 newspaper article about Bumblee City.

While growing up in the village, Robert Earl worked after school for Thompson's Store (later the Corner Store) at a wage of five cents an hour. Among his duties was delivering five gallon cans of kerosene to customers in the village using a wheelbarrow to transport them. He attended Marcellus High School and later a school in Michigan. After attending the University of Michigan, he was a research and plant chemist at Allied Chemical Corporation in Solvay, Split Rock and Buffalo. For the last thirty-three years of his career he worked for the Aluminum Company of America in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In 1943, Robert married Viola Jurgenson who had taught at the University of Wisconsin and Pennsylvania State Teachers' College. They had no children and she died in 1952 and was buried in Portage, Wisconsin. Robert died in 1975 and he and his parents are buried at Highland Cemetery in Marcellus.

Robert always had fond memories of Marcellus and often came back to visit. His will revealed a perpetual Trust Fund established in 1952. Beneficiaries were Marcellus Free Library and the Protestant Churches in the Village. It also provided a scholarship fund to be given to a male student at Marcellus Central School who was an active member of one of the Protestant Churches and planning to pursue a career in medicine or engineering.

Recently the Historical Society was given several pictures of Robert, the family home, a wagon built by his father, and Spinks family pictures by Martha Chadwick Eggers, a descendant of the Spinks family and distant cousin of Robert.

(Sources: *Nine Mile Country* by Kathryn C. Heffernan and Baker family records)

...Submitted by Peg Nolan and Hollis Abbott ~

EVENTS SCHEDULE

The tentative schedule of events is as follows:

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| Sunday, February 12, 2006 | 2 p.m. |
| <u>Robert L. Hayden</u>
"Bluegrass" | |
| Sunday, March 12, 2006 | 2 p.m. |
| <u>Eugene T. Harmon</u>
"Wood Turning, the Making of Bowls" | |
| Sunday, April 9, 2006 | 2 p.m. |
| <u>TBA</u> | |

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 2006/2007

- President: Peg Nolan673-1765
E-mail: pegnolan@hotmail.com
- Vice President: Bruce Widger673-9142
E-mail: drbwwidger@alltel.net
- Treasurer: Hollis Abbott.....673-1753
E-mail: habbott1@twcny.rr.com
- Secretary: Carriebeth Pottinger....673-3187
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Correspondence Secretary: Joyce Murphy..673-2528

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

Please direct comments or questions to Hollis Abbott.

From The President ...

Thirty seven of our members enjoyed the Holiday Dinner. Thank you to Hollis Abbott, Fran Randall and Joyce Murphy for organizing this event.

Many volunteer hours have been donated at the museum this past year. A big Thank You to Hollis Abbott and Leda Stopyro for their dedication and hard work.

The family history files are being put into hanging file folders and cross referenced with an index on the computer. Indexes of the last three years of Marcellus Memories have been completed and indexing of the Marcellus Observers for names, events, sales etc. is being worked on.

We are missing many old Marcellians if you have any that you would like to donate.

Thanks to Judy Morton for presenting her history of the automobile in Marcellus in the early 1900's to the museum.

The museum is open Thursday afternoons from 1-4, weather permitting. We will resume regular hours in the spring.

Happy New Year!

Peg Nolan ~



**Mr. & Mrs.
Robert M.
Baker**

**Out for a spin
in the
Early 1900's**

Early Automobiles in Marcellus

Judith Morton has compiled a history of automobiles in Marcellus from 1900 to 1915. The first section describes the models that were owned and seen in town during that period while the second section lists the registered owners and their cars. Additional sections cover: businesses and regulations needed to cope with the growing popularity of the automobile; the influence of women on the new industry; politics and accidents; interesting facts; photos of early autos; and traffic control. Please visit the museum to see this interesting and detailed work.

...Submitted by Hollis Abbott ~

In Remembrance

Dr. Leone A. Buffan - November 3, 2005

The Marcellus Observer July 7, 1894

**History of the Marcellus Falls Flouring Mill
Continued. The Old Grist Mill and
Distillery and Saw Mill on the North Side.**

SIXTEENTH PAPER

The firm of H. Cordenio Smith & Co. made business lively at the Falls for many years. They were constantly making improvements and giving every evidence of prosperity. Among their latest was the addition of an office giving additional room for office help and for sometime Miss Lottie DeCoudres was assistant bookkeeper. Matters were going along very much as usual when all at once to the great surprise of most, rumors of failure were in the air, and on Saturday, October 29, 1892, the mill was closed and the failure became known. The matter is of so recent date that we need not here recite the details. The property was heavily encumbered by mortgage to various parties. The history of this property since has been somewhat of a mystery to the community. The personal property of the firm was sold in a lump at chattel mortgage sale and bid in in the interest of W. H. Gallup for an even \$1,000. The mill stood idle most of the time for a few months or until February 6, 1893 when the mill and accompanying property was sold on foreclosure and bid in by W. H. Gallup one of the mortgagees, in whose possession it still remains. Since which time the mill has been occupied and run a considerable part of the time by Allen V. Smith, who is still doing quite a business in flour and feed. He buys his wheat mainly from the farmers and ships flour by the car load east and furnishes flour and feed for the local trade. Thomas Reynolds is the chief miller.

Between the flouring mill and the pearl barley mill, there was originally a mill site, occupied at an early day for a grist mill, situated a little north of the present old walls, and was one of the first mills in this part of the country, and was built about 1810. We have not been able to learn who built it but quite early it was owned by Henry S. Platt, and was afterwards run by his son Joseph Platt and Silas Crane as a custom mill, and was patronized for many years.

About 1820 there was attached to it, in the cellar or basement, a distillery by Platt & Crane which did quite a business for several years and was run a while by Isaac Benham, and later by Arthur Machan. The yard for hogs and cattle was across the race near where the two tenant houses now stand.

Some amusing stories are told of some of the hogs getting drunk at different times. Once was on Sunday

when the rectifying process was carried on in the cellar of the old store on the side hill above the road. By neglect the tub overflowed and the liquor mingled in the stream that flowed down the hill, and some of the hogs got to it and one after another got so drunk that they couldn't walk, and one man said they couldn't wink. At another time the hogs got some cherry pomace and made similar antics, to the amusement of the lookers on. Though some of them rolled and tumbled about considerably, none of them, as of old, though filled with an evil spirit, ran down the bank into the stream and were drowned.

When the grist mill and distillery was burned in 1829 it was owned by Zerah Shepard & Platt. Mr. Shepard was sick at the time, but was able to look out of his sick room and see it burn. They had just been putting in some improvements, such as an overshot water wheel and a new masher to run by water instead of by hand as in the old process, and were feeling well over their success when the fire came and burned everything up in a few hours. Soon after the fire a saw mill was built on the same site by Wiard & Sands, about 1831 or 1832. This mill did a large business, and logs were drawn here as far away as from the pine woods north of Peru, the firm buying many of the logs and hiring them drawn. The logs used to cover a good deal of territory, and at times reached along the road nearly up to the school house.

...Submitted by John Curtin ~



The above picture of 12 North Street shows Robert Earl Baker in his pony cart with Kip Kennedy, his nurse. The pony was named Rob Roy.

Museum Hours:

Thursdays from 1 to 4 pm (Weather permitting)

**Or By Appointment: Bruce Widger - 673-9142
Hollis Abbott - 673-1753**

Recent Acquisitions: *We wish to thank the following people for donating items to the museum collection:* **Bruce Widger** for 1949 card table from the Masons imprinted with local advertising; **Helen Hopkins** for small Bicentennial flag, 4 spools of darning cotton; **Fred Eisenberg** for 1845 Marcellus letter; **Bob Post** for old eyeglasses; **Kathleen Walker** for John Moir's desk chair; **Harold Chapman** for Marcellus High School pencil; **Mark Friske** for 1966 MCS Christmas record by the B Sharp Club; **Michael Plumpton** for dry cell used in crank telephones; **Judith Morton** for her book about Marcellus automobiles and their owners in the early 1900's. ~

Donations: *Our thanks to the following people for cash donations:*

Hazel & Donald Buschbascher; James & Laura Duncan; Roger & Joan Field; Judy Gilchrist; Barbara Parsons Hildreth. ~

Renewed Members: *(since our last newsletter) (Sustaining members in bold print, New members underlined):* Bill & Carol Abbott, Brian & Debi Abbott & Family, Mark & Lynn Abbott & Family, Margaret Aherin, Timothy Aherin, Mike Brilbeck, Michael & Tobey Casler, William & Martha Cole & Family, Mary Jane L. Domurat, Mary Drexler, Fred & Pat Eisenberg, **Judy Gilchrist**, Nettie Gilmour, James & Cheryl Gonzalez, **Raymond P. & Christine Heer**, Helen Hopkins, Phyllis Huckle, Tyrone & Sylvia King, Elizabeth Lathrop, James Lozott, Mary Montague, Vincent & Mary Murphy, Doug & Jean Nightingale, Joe & Peg Nolan, Marni Nolan, Ruth B. Oliver, Mary Orzesek, Julia Pepperman, Robert L. Post, Carriebeth Pottinger, Florence Pottinger, Robert, Manuela & Caroline Reagan, Sheila Schweitzer, Dale & Joyce Sims, Richard & Frances Smith, **Carol Stalker**, Don & Jan Thornton, Dr. Bruce & Mary Widger, Bob & Kay Wilson, David & Linda Wilson. ~

Current membership: 413

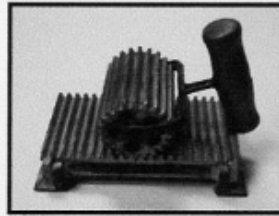
Membership Dues

A reminder that membership dues cover January 1 through December 31. Newsletters are not sent to members who have not renewed by the end of March. The label on the newsletter indicates the year dues are paid through. ~

Internet access available at the Museum

The computer at the museum can be used to access the internet for family research. ~

From the Museum: Fluting Irons



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

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Next Meeting:
Sunday, February 12th at 2 p.m.

(The date on the label is the
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INSIDE:

- * *Robert Earl Baker*
- * *Early Automobiles in Marcellus*
- * *More on Marcellus Falls Mills*
- * *Fluting Irons*

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