

**Wilson Historical Society**

WILSON, NEW YORK 14172

**NEWSLETTER**

DONALD W. CROOP, Editor

JANUARY 1987 Vol. 16 No.1  
(Coleman Press)

LIBRARIAN  
WILSON CENTRAL SCHOOL  
WILSON, NY 14172

**DEPOT TO MUSEUM:**

Ground was broken for the new Lake Ontario Shore Railroad in Oswego County, July 20, 1871 and the first rails were laid about two years later. The road was completed to Ontario, 52 miles west of Oswego, during the winter of 1873-74; also a portion of the grading through to Lewiston.

During the summer of 1874 the Lake Ontario line was acquired by the Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg railroad. Arrangements were immediately made to lay the tracks to Lewiston, and on March 22, 1876, the last spike connecting the R.W.& O. and the N.Y. Central in Lewiston were driven into place.

The total cost of the completed railroad was 5 million dollars, and the 1st passenger train rolled over the western end of the line on June 12, 1876.

The first station at Wilson was built by the R.W.& O., and was 131.05 miles from Oswego. It served the Wilson community until 1905 when the original station was torn down and replaced with one of more modern design. This is confirmed in the Jan. 12, 1905 edition of the Wilson "Star" which states, "The N.Y. Central is tearing down the old R.W.& O. depot in this village, and the waiting room and freight room will be much larger in the new station. The office is now located in a car on the siding during erection of the new building."

About 7 years later, this station was enlarged and a slate-asbestos roof was put over the entire complex. In a report published Aug. 16, 1912, the "Star" stated, "The N.Y. Central station here is to be enlarged...a 30' addition on the east end of the present station will be used as a waiting room...and a 40' addition is to be built on the west end...the interior will be remodeled with the ticket office, waiting room, freight office all being enlarged."

Work was still in progress on Oct. 14, 1913, when the "Star" reported, "When completed, the depot will be one of the largest and best equipped depots between Rochester and the Falls.

The station was not only the focal point for most of the business conducted in or out of Wilson, but also the spot where people gathered to pass on the news of the day. Numerous tales have been handed down over the years with the railroad itself, sometimes, the butt of the stories.

The editor of the "Star", for instance, noted that on March 29, 1894, a letter was received at the Wilson Postoffice that had been mailed from Niagara Falls on Jan. 19, 1882. He dryly commented, "We always knew the R.W.&O. was slow, but this beats all records."

Another story was told of a "drummer" who, when buying a ticket for Charlotte, asked the ticket agent how late the train would be. He was astonished when the agent told him the train was on time. "How come?", the traveler asked in amazement. "Oh, this is yesterday's train," the agent responded, "She's exactly 24 hours late."

Gertrude Patterson Salisbury, daughter of station agent Richard Patterson, recalled that many tramps used to ride into Wilson on the numerous freight trains. They would hide in the Stevens or Swick woods until dark, then would break into the station looking for money or the ticket stamp. They seldom found either because Patterson took all the cash home with him, and always hid the ticket stamp in the wastepaper basket.

One time Gertrude's mother bought some Christmas presents in Buffalo, and hid them in the depot safe. Tramps broke into it that night and must have been somewhat dismayed when all they found were two dolls and a silk petticoat.

Before the present depot was built, farmer's wives would often drive their horses and buggies to the station to ship milk to Niagara Falls. When the freight engines shifted cars around, it was hard for the ladies to control their horses. To help them out, Patterson moved his desk to a north window opposite the tracks where the horses weren't so easily upset.

One time, a little old lady was seen trying to board the train but was noticeably under the influence of intoxicants. She seemed bound and determined to ride on the baggage car platform, and the conductor was forced to put her off. Later she was found stretched out on the depot's waiting room floor, sleeping contentedly as though on a feather bed. It was eventually discovered that the woman lived near Brockport, and was reputed to be the owner of considerable property.

Passenger service was discontinued in 1934, and freight service ended in 1959. The Wilson Canning Co. bought the depot in 1961, and resold it to the late Dr. Argue in 1965. Dr. Argue turned the property over to the town of Wilson in 1972 for use as a museum and meeting place for the Wilson Historical Society.

The museum is now the home for many of the artifacts and memorabilia from Wilson's past, while the old depot, looking much as it did in 1912-13, is a reminder of that period when the old "Hojack" was the hub of Wilson's industry and social life.

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**VOLUNTEERS ARE SPECIAL:**

During the past 15 years, as we've de-~~scribed~~ one volunteer project after another in the monthly Newsletter, we have seen a boarded-up railroad depot, (once used for storage) blossom into a museum the entire town can be proud of.

Some of our earlier members have passed on or moved to warmer climes, but the work they accomplished is still remembered. They were part of a great volunteer effort to establish a museum in the town of Wilson, and helped prove that people can do anything once they set their minds to it.

Their places have been taken by others who carry on the dream--much in the same spirit that our Colonial ancestors had when they carved a mighty nation from the wilderness.

In a recent edition of the "Wilson Chronicle", Harold Mosher, town supervisor, paid special tribute to all our town's volunteers and, in reference to the current effort by the Wilson Historical Society to build a new transportation building remarked, "This is but another example of the dedication of the people of our community, and their labor will be notched in the preservation of the history of Wilson."

He also raised another interesting thought when he said, "Take a moment to think what our town would be lacking without its volunteers. Consider the many volunteer firemen who answer fire alarms or ambulance calls in early morning hours or cold wintry days; or the P.T.A. members who contribute so much to better education of our youth; also the many volunteers who give of their time and labor to Church groups, Boy and Girl Scout troops, Lion's Club, Little League, Library Board, Sports Boosters, 4-H Clubs, and many more."

We agree! The town of Wilson would be a very drab place without its volunteers.

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**NEW LIFE MEMBER:**

Paul J. Pasko of Niagara Falls, has taken out a Life Membership in the Wilson Historical Society for his younger brother, Donald Grove Pasko, who died April 16, 1986 at Delanson, NY.

Donald was born in 1912 at Syracuse, NY, and moved to Wilson in 1914 when his father, Rev. William Judson Pasko, assumed the pastorate of the 1st Baptist Church of Wilson. As a boy, he learned to fish on the East Branch of 12 Mile Creek in the area between Cannon Ball Hill and the village. It was a hobby which he pursued to the time of his death.

He majored in Ichthyology at the College of Agriculture, Cornell University, and spent his life working for the Fisheries Division of the N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation. He became Supervisor over all the Fishery Districts in New York State, and pioneered the introduction of Salmon to the waters of Lake Ontario and eastern Lake Erie.

It is a pleasure to add Mr. Pasko's name to the society's Life Membership roll, and we thank his brother, Paul, for making it possible.

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**IN MEMORIAM:**

The society sadly notes the passing of Mrs. Ruth (Peuchen) Gale, 92, who died Nov. 23, 1986 at the Orchard Park Health-Related Center at Orchard Park, NY.

Mrs. Gale was a resident of Wilson for over 60 years, and a member of St. John's Episcopal Church. In the 1920's she helped organize and lead Girl Scout Troop #1, the first G.S. troop in Wilson, and was also an Honorary Member of the Wilson Historical Society which she joined in 1972.

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We also just received word of the demise of Mrs. Mildred Moody Eakin, 97, who died Oct. 7th at Lake Alped, Florida.

She graduated from Wilson High School in 1906, also the Drew Theological Seminary. She taught school in Wilson while caring for her father, and then returned to Drew to continue teaching.

She was widely known for her writing and religious work, and wrote several books, some in collaboration with her late husband, Frank Eakin.

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**BUILDING PROGRESS:**

Art Schnoor, Ollie Clark, Tom Walder, (to name a few) have been working between the rain-drops in an effort to get the transportation building closed in before winter sets in. John Myers and Donald Smithson have been doing a great job on the electrical wiring.

We believe it is generally agreed that the building could not have been erected without the volunteer labor and professional "know-how" of some of our members. While on the subject, we also wish to mention Ora Pettit who donated considerable labor to repair the society's electric "Citi-car", and replace the door seals on the museum refrigerator.

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**RECENT DONATIONS:**

Harold Swanson has donated an Addressograph Machine, Model H, which was originally used by Local 233 of the International Typographical Union and N.Y. Typographical Conference. (1930's)

Gerry Swann: Man's Black Derby--ca. 1920.

Vesta Frost (Mrs. Clifford), Beechwood, Gettsville: 1946 Centennial issue of "Crest"; Wilson Centennial Booklet; "Starlight", Wilson Class of 1916; 1916 Commencement Invitation and clippings about same.

Gordon Mawhiney and Paul Goetz: Lawnmower made by Savage Arms in early 1930's. In good working order.

Angela Shea: Calendar of 19th Century Locomotives, and 10 prints of antique cards.

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**JANUARY PROGRAM:**

John Myers will be the guest speaker at the Monday night meeting of the society scheduled for January 19, 1987. The subject of his program is a "Mystery", and now that we've aroused your curiosity, we suggest you attend the meeting and find out what it's all about.

Refreshments will be served by Marilyn Allgeier and Wanda Burrows.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the home of John and Eleanor Myers, Lake and Wood Sts., January 14, 1987 at 8:00P.M.

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MAKING HISTORY:

During the Holiday Season we are reminded that one of Wilson's volunteer organizations, the "Caring Christian Community Center," is providing food, clothing, and toys to those less fortunate in our area.

We think it is well to point out that the C.C.C.C., which is supported by local churches, gives help to people all year 'round---not just at Christmas.

Donations of non-perishable foods, new or used clothing, or new and used toys may be left at the Exley United Methodist Church any Wednesday afternoon from one to three.

The more you respond, the more you will help.

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NEW MEMBERS:

It is a pleasure to welcome the following new members into the Wilson Historical Society: Jerauld and Janet Brydges of Niagara Falls; Claude and Ruth Lampman of Wilson; and Harry Haven, also from Wilson.

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CHRISTMAS PROGRAM WELL RECEIVED:

A delightful, entertaining "Italian Christmas" program was presented at the December meeting by Mary and Tony Cipolla of Wilson, Michael and Antoinette Molinaro of Lockport, and Rev. Paul Burkard, Our Lady of the Rosary R.C. Church, who acted as monitor.

Many of the beautiful old customs of celebrating Christmas in Italy were recalled, and most of the day was spent in the worship of the Baby Jesus (Gesù Bambino). Although Santa Claus and the exchange of gifts was not a part of the Christmas tradition, much dancing, feasting, and the drinking of wine (vino) took place in the streets.

A delicious assortment of Italian delicacies, usually made for the occasion, were prepared by Mrs. Cipolla and Mrs. Molinaro including fig cookies (cucciadate); nougat candy (tervoni); yellow beans (lepine), and cookies (gigulena).

Needless to say, these were all enjoyed by society members along with the punch and traditional Christmas cookies prepared and served by refreshments hostesses, Emma Schrader, Jean Swanson, and Maxine Jones.

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TWO ANGELS:

Thanks to Carole Schnoor and Millie Lonsbery, another successful "Snow Bear" drawing was conducted at the December meeting. The "Snow Bear" was given to Clara Marcks, the "Reindeer" to Carrie Geise; and the "Santa Bear" to Jack Maxfield.

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CLASS VISITS MUSEUM:

Mrs. Nancy Nievert's 4th grade class at Thomas Marks School visited the museum on Dec. 16th, where they were welcomed by Mrs. Lois Jennings, curator.

Before dividing into three small groups, a short discussion period was held on the early history of Wilson. The 24 youngsters were then guided through the museum by Mrs. Jennings and Don and Millie Croop.

The students asked numerous questions, and appeared to be genuinely interested in the many artifacts on display.

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WHAT A DIFFERENCE 100 YEARS MAKE:

The village of Wilson got through the fiscal year of 1895 on \$425.87, and \$92.50 was left in the treasury. (Niagara Falls Journal--March 6, 1896)

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ANNUAL BREAKFAST HELD:

The 5th annual breakfast for Senior Citizens living in the W.C.S. District was held in the Junior/Senior High School recently, and 142 seniors attended. Over 450 students participated in the event which is sponsored by the Wilson Teachers Association and the Wilson Central School District.

A delicious breakfast was organized and prepared by 8th grade Home and Career Skill students in cooperation with the cafeteria staff. Entertainment during the event was provided by the Student Band, the Senior Ensemble, and the Musicale. There were also a variety of other entertainment including over 34 exhibits of student skills in the school library.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

At the December meeting, the treasurer notified the Board that funds allotted to the new transportation building have been spent, and that money budgeted in the general operating fund is now being used to pay additional costs.

In view of this, the Directors decided that all documentation necessary for implementing the \$15,000 grant promised by the State should be delivered personally to grant officials in Albany.

Whit Barnum, Pres., Don Croop, and Don Burrows were authorized to deliver the documents on December 19th, and at the same time clarify any questions that might arise.

Following a successful conference with Vincent Stallone, Jr., Director, and other officials of the N.Y.S. Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the historical society's delegation was informed that its proposals were in good order and that the grant money should be forthcoming by mid February.

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DID YOU KNOW.....

That the two top students to graduate from the new Wilson High School in 1936 were Melva Arnold, valedictorian, and Rachel Holman, salutatorian, both residents of Ransomville.

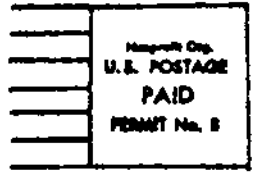
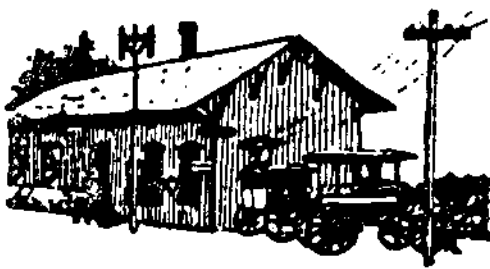
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HAPPY NEW YEAR:

As the Wilson Historical Society starts its 15th exciting New Year, we wish all our members a happy, healthy, prosperous, and peaceful one.

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## NEWSLETTER

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FEBRUARY 1987 VOL. 16 No. 2  
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### WINTER CHORES "DOWN ON THE FARM":

There have been a lot of changes "down on the farm" since those days when ol' Dobbin was the main source of horsepower. Family farms were still quite prevalent and, though their acreage was small, most were able to provide the simple needs of those who operated them.

Work was mostly done by members of the family, but some of the better run farms were able to support a hired man and even part time "hands" for special jobs. Winter was the time to "batten down the hatches", so's to speak, and the short days were often spent cutting wood, husking corn, sorting beans, trimming trees or grapes, or just sipping cider by a pot-belly stove or warm fireplace.

The late Earl Armstrong of Wilson once noted some of the jobs he worked at in those early days before social security, unemployment insurance, food stamps, and welfare, (as we know them today.) It was a time when one dollar a day plus room and board were pretty fair wages on the farm.

He remembered how he used to walk three miles from his home to the Pease farm where he spent the day sawing and splitting wood. He and his partner were expected to be in the woods by daylight, and would work there until dark. It was necessary to carry a lunch pail, double bit axe, and cross cut saw to the work site, and he recalled that the first thing they did was to build a fire to set their lunch pails near--thus assuring there'd be no frozen sandwiches at lunch time.

Axes were used to clear branches from the trees, and a six foot cross cut saw was used to saw the logs into 14 inch blocks. These were split into slabs with axe and wedge, and two men had to work hard to cut up 5 cords a day.

They received 50 cents a cord or about \$2.50 a day for their labor, which gave each man \$1.25 for his day's work. When it was too dark to work any longer, they had the three mile trek back to town to look forward to.

Another cold weather chore was husking corn. A person could usually hire out to husk corn on shares, and his pay was generally one bushel of corn for every five bushels filled. If one worked real steady, he could husk about 40 bushels a day, giving him 8 bushels to keep.

The corn could then be turned in at the Charles Chapman Mill on Young Street for 20 cents a bushel. The \$1.60 received for the day's work was slightly better than the pay received for cutting wood all day.

Sorting beans was another family project for wintry days. The bad beans were used for chicken feed while the good ones were kept for eating or sold for cash. Needless to say, a lot of baked beans and bean soup were consumed in those days.

The bigger bean growers were able to get a better price for their product when the beans were hand sorted, so they were always willing to take bags of beans to anyone's home who would be willing to sort them.

Cutting wood manually with axe and cross cut saw was still quite common into the 1930's, and Henry Beaman and Rollin Chace of Chestnut Rd., Wilson, were very efficient at it.

We recall having them cut up an old apple orchard on our place about that time which they agreed to do on a share and share alike basis. They seemed to thoroughly enjoy working together, and Mr. Chace would sometimes remark, "You know, a person gets warm twice when cutting wood, once when he saws it, and again when he burns it."

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### THE SENATOR SLEPT:

The late State Senator Earl W. Brydges of Wilson, while on an early election speaking tour, missed connections with the New York Central "Empire State Express" when a hotel clerk at Newburgh, NY, forgot to awaken him one morning.

The senator, without much hope for success, called the New York office to see if a train could be stopped at Beacon where he could board it. Much to his surprise the train stopped, and courteous railroad employees were soon giving him the "red carpet treatment".

It wasn't until later that the congenial State Senator from Wilson discovered that officials in New York had mistaken him for U.S. Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire. (Union Sun & Journal-1952)

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### MEMORIAL FUND REPORT:

Our treasurer reports that during the year 1986, \$4,035 was contributed to the Memorial Fund in memory of loved ones by members and friends of the Wilson Historical Society.

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NOSTALGIA is a file that removes the rough edges from the good old days. (Doug Larson)

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FIRST TREE RECALLED:

The society's 1st Christmas tree was decorated in the Town Hall by Joe Higgins and Betty Stimson in December, 1972. Candles on the branches and old ornaments were tastefully displayed midst strings of popcorn and cranberries, while old toys from yesteryear were placed on the floor around the tree.

The society has had a beautifully decorated tree in the museum every year since, and the past few years there has been one in both the Patterson Room and Waiting Room.

For many years, Joe made an attractive wreath from evergreen boughs to place outside the building, but last year Lois Jennings made a huge 3 foot wreath covered with a hundred white sparkling lights for mounting on the east end of the depot.

Sadly enough, what goes up must come down, so a word of thanks to those who pitched in and helped pack the decorations away for another year: Edna Rose, Chrm., Bob Rose, Jane Demmin, Cindy Wilson, Flossie Lortz, Millie Croop, and Burt and Lois Jennings.

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NEW LIFE MEMBERS:

Donna and Sidney Pettit of Wilson are now Life Members of the Wilson Historical Society through the courtesy of their son, Gary, who presented them with the special memberships in honor of their 39th Wedding Anniversary.

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Sidney Walton Pettit, the son of Earl and Rubie Jarvis Pettit, was born on the Brayley Rd., Wilson, April 17, 1924. He attended the District #5 School, and graduated from the Wilson Central School in 1942.

Sidney is retired from E.I. Dupont, Niagara Falls, where he was employed as a pipefitter for 33 years. He is a member of the 1st Baptist Church of Wilson, and enjoys hunting, stock car racing, fishing, and bowling.

His maternal grandfather, Rev. Charles Jarvis, was pastor of the 1st Baptist Church of Wilson for 5 years, and his paternal grandfather, Silas Pettit, used to haul milk for the old Glen Leetch Dairy in Wilson.

Sidney's great grandfather, William O. Pettit, settled in Wilson in 1822.

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Donna Reed Pettit, the daughter of Lawrence and Frances Reed, was born in Newfane, and attended the District #13 School on Wilson-Cambria Road. She graduated from Wilson Central School in 1945, and married Sidney Pettit in 1947. They have three children, Gary, Rodney, and Carol (Chase) of Mentor, Ohio; also one grandchild, Mathew Chase.

Donna was one of the 1st members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Wilson, and later became a member of the 1st Baptist Church where she has served on numerous Boards, and also taught Sunday School for 25 years.

In 1946 she was employed in the Wilson Postoffice while Frank Campbell was Postmaster, and has worked there under five postmasters for the past 29 years. She is a charter member of the Lake Shore Mother' Club, and her main hobby is gardening and making floral arrangements.

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RECENT ACQUISITIONS:

Eleanor Eckert has donated 8 Crystal Glasses to the museum that were given as wedding presents to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Schultz, in January, 1903.

Harold Donner, Ithaca, NY: Two books, "The Erie Canal" (1817-1967) by Clarence O. Lewis; and a "History of Randleigh Farm" (1937).

Mrs. Walter Wilson: Photo of east end of "Sunset Island"; Framed picture of Tugwell home on island, ca. 1915; and Framed picture of Walter, Emerson, Llewelyn, and Merle Wilson with Lark Moag and Ted Myers.

Franklin Bickford, Newburyport, Mass: One wood Maytag Washing Machine from estate of Charles Lee and Edith Thompson, Ransomville. The machine is believed to have been purchased new by them ca. 1930.

Wilson Free Library: "Crests", 1959, 1943; Souvenir History of Niagara County; New York Times, 3/5/39; "Jubilee" issue of Niagara Falls Gazette, 10/8/67; Niagara-Orleans Atlas, 1875; and Century Atlas, 1908.

Richard Bickford, Newfane: Detroit Jewel Gas Stove, ca. 1920.

Edward Goodnight: Large matted photo of 1903 Caboose showing "Hojack" sign.

Cynthia Wilson: Large brass handled Kettle and Dress Form.

Mrs. John Argue: 1967 Volvo in good condition.

Donna Pettit: Door Latch and Lock from the original old Postoffice.

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PUBLICATIONS NOTICE:

In order to help hold down publication costs, it has been decided not to publish a 1987 Membership Roll, also reprints of the brochure, "Welcome to the Museum" will be postponed until March since the museum will not reopen to visitors until Sunday, April 5th.

It is suggested that members keep their 1986 membership booklets, and add new names as they appear in the Newsletter.

The membership rolls are useful for fair chairmen who wish to contact helpers, and is also used by the nominating committee when selecting nominees for presentation at the May meeting.

Hopefully, an updated roll can be published in 1988. We believe it is essential that our members know who belongs to the society, otherwise it might become increasingly difficult to find people to support it.

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NEW MEMBERS:

A cordial welcome to our latest new members: Mrs. Mary Cigal of Washington, W. Virginia, a sister of Judy Barnum of Somerset. Also, Mrs. Helen Thompson Heckes of Oysterville, Washington, a direct descendent of Luther Wilson.

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EXPERIENCE is wonderful; it allows you to recognize a mistake every time you repeat it.

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"PIONEER" RETURNS TO LOWER FORTY-EIGHT:

Several weeks ago we received a letter from Elton Jonas of Smith River, California, requesting information about his grandparents, August and Fredreka Jonas, who settled on the (present) German Road ca. 1865. He said the German Road was originally named the Jonas Road after his grandparents, and he remembered the small cabin near the Daniel's Road in which they lived.

Jonas started his schooling in the one room frame schoolhouse at the corner of the Willow and Townline Roads, and in the wintertime, when his father was unable to start their Model-T Ford, he would hitch a horse to the cutter and drive him to school. He recalled that sometimes the kids would bring vegetables and meat to school, and the teacher would cook up a stew on the pot-belly stove that stood in the center of the room.

When he attended the Union School, Lottie Coombs was his teacher, and it was about this time that his father died. When not in school, he spent much of his time fishing at the harbor and going "netting" with Merle Wilson and "Uncle Billie".

It was ca. the 1960's when he decided to become a modern day pioneer and headed for Alaska. His wife, who was raised in Somerset, went with him, and they built a two room cabin in which there was no electricity. Propane gas was used for light and cooking, and they kept warm with a pot-belly stove in which either wood or coal could be burned. They raised their own vegetables, and, since the soil is very rich in Alaska, were able to grow cabbage that weighed up to 30 pounds a head. The summers were warm and often reached 90 degrees, but it also was very cold in winter, often reaching seventy degrees below zero.

Jonas is a carpenter, and said he wouldn't recommend anyone going to Alaska without a trade.

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IT'S A SMALL WORLD:

A check of the society's 1986 guest register reveals that during the 9 month period from April to January, 1,020 persons visited the museum and signed the book. Of this total, 58 were from 17 different states including Hawaii, and several guests registered from Germany, Mexico, Japan, and Canada.

Many favorable comments have been received regarding the museum, and the society is grateful to the 77 hosts and hostesses who greeted our visitors and made them feel welcome.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

As a matter of information, it has been suggested that the names of all board members be published in the Newsletter.

Officers: Whitney Barnum, Pres., Norm MacAskill, 1st Vice-Pres., John Myers, 2nd Vice-Pres., Faye Pisello, Rec. Sec., Helen Stevens, Cor. Sec., and Millie Croop, Treas.

Trustees: Mrs. John Argue; Ed Hastings; Burt Jennings; Don Burrows; Don Croop; Art Schnoor; Leo Klees; Nettie Stimson; and George Linnabery. Also, Harold Mosher; town supervisor; and Eleanor Myers, town historian.

Appointees: Lois Jennings, Curator; Art Schnoor, Chrm., Planning Board; and George Linnabery, Chrm, Antique Car Comm.

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BOARD MEETING:

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the home of Clark and Nettie Stimson, February 11th, at 8:00 PM.

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MUSEUM'S ANTIQUE & CLASSIC CARS:

As of January 1, 1987, the following list of cars have been donated and accepted: 1904 Covert; 1907 Metz; 1928 Reo Coupe; 1957 Lincoln Mark II; 1959 Cadillac Convertible; 1962 Vauxhall; 1970 Olds Cutlas Convertible; 1967 Pontiac Convertible; 1923 Chevrolet One Ton Truck; 1919 Ford T.T. Truck; 1973 Buick Riv.; 1968 Corvair Monza Cp.; 1966 Cadillac Covertible; 1962 Chrysler 4dr sedan; 1963 Avanti Studebaker; 1946 Chrysler Imp. Limousine; 1952 Willys Jeep; 1976 Electric Citi-car; 1969 Volkswagon Bus; 1974 Volkswagon Super Bug; 1975 Buick Riviera; 1967 Volvo.

Six cars were disposed of including: 1966 Plymouth; 1970 Cadillac Cp; 1967 Imperial LeBaron; 1960 Volvo; 1972 Pinto; and 1978 Buick Electra.

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FEBRUARY PROGRAM:

Lynda Williams, music instructor at Wilson Central School, will present the program at the regular monthly meeting of the society on February 16th, at 7:30PM. Lynda will be assisted by some of her piano students as they carry out the theme, "Piano Students Come for a Lesson".

Lucille Upton and Helen Stevens will serve light refreshments after the program.

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AHEAD OF THEIR TIME:

The proprietors of the Lockport Journal have thrown their compositors into a state of alarm by intimating that they think favorably of the idea of employing women typesetters. (Wilson "Star". July 18, 1895.)

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MEETING POSTPONED:

Due to storm warnings and poor visibility, the regular meeting scheduled for January 19th was postponed until the following week.

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MEMORIAL DAY FAIR:

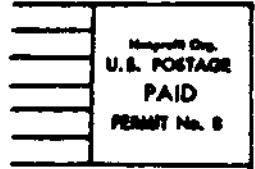
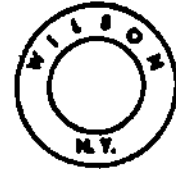
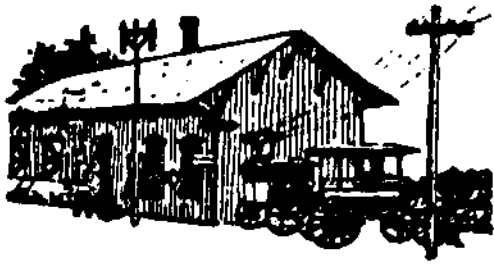
Nettie Stimson, Lois Barnum, and Millie Croop have agreed to share the responsibility for the 1987 Memorial Day Fair. A meeting will be held soon to make plans, and you'll make their job easier if you'll please volunteer to help and not wait to be asked.

This is the society's 15th annual fair, and as you all should know, our main source of income. If you have ideas or suggestions, contact one of the above.

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BOW MOT: Elephants and grandchildren never forget.

(Andy Rooney)



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SERVING HISTORY, TODAY HISTORIAN  
215 LAKE ST.  
WILSON, NY 14172

**THE HISTORIC WOODEN CABOOSE:**

It would be hard to drive by the Wilson Museum without noticing the old wooden caboose that sets just north of the former depot. Now, with everyone's attention focused on the new transportation building, we shouldn't forget that the old caboose is one of a fast disappearing breed.

It was acquired from Robert Stephanski, Jr., of Lockport through the persistence of the late Dr. John F. Argue of Wilson, 1st President of the Wilson Historical Society.

After considerable research, a set of blueprints for it were obtained, and it was determined that it had been built in 1903 at the New York Central Car barns in Rochester, NY. It is classed as a work caboose, and for many years was used to service the rail line between Rochester and Niagara Falls, NY. Actually, it was a home on wheels for the work crews who ate and slept in it.

On each side of the car are the upholstered bunks where the men could store their gear or tools and relax. Near the middle, along the north side, is an authentic coal stove which not only heated the vehicle, but could be used for warming up soup or coffee, or even cooking simple meals. Next to the stove is a coal bin, and beyond it a section with small ice box and storage space for food or other commodities. There is also a small wash basin and simple toilet, also a water hose connected to an overhead tank.

At the rear of the car, one may climb up and sit beneath the raised cupola where the brakeman could keep an eye on the freight cars connecting the caboose with the locomotive. From there, signals could be sent back and forth-flashing lights or "toots" on the whistle.

Some of the society's railroad memorabilia housed in the caboose has an interesting history. A galvanized kettle, (with spout) is a good example. During the days of the Great Depression, many tramps or hoboes used to "ride the rails" on the numerous freight trains that passed through Wilson. Some of them would leave the train to seek shelter in the nearby Wilson or Swick woods. There they'd set up camp and cook meals over an open fire. One time, one of the hoboes apparently stole an official N.Y. Central galvanized kettle, which was used to cook up potato soup in Wilson's woods. The kettle was later found by Mr. Wilson, and, (still in excellent condition) was given to the museum by Miss Mabel Wilson.

Another interesting item on display is a forked wooden pole which, with a little imagination, could be compared to an old carpet beater. This was used by the station agent to hook messages from the train crew when a locomotive slowed down at the station but wasn't scheduled to stop.

How the caboose came to be placed on the museum grounds is a story in itself. Members of the society discovered a covered-over switching spur once used by the original Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg line. A group of men cleared off the spur, which was located just north of the depot, and prepared the site for the newly acquired caboose. Whitney Barnum, Ollie Clark, Earl Swann, and Bob Rohring placed new rails and ties over the original roadbed, and Don Kerwin, Lloyd Albright, Fred Berry, and Thomas Sharpe III drove the iron spikes into the ties to hold the rails in position.

When everything was ready, "Red" Clark donated his time and equipment to transport the caboose from Lockport where it was disassembled, then brought to Wilson on a flatbed; with the two heavy wheel sections loaded on a truck. It was a memorable day in December, 1974, when a caravan of cars and trucks, escorted by the Niagara County Sheriff's Department, pulled into the Wilson Museum with lights flashing and sirens blowing. A short time later, the crane operator lowered the wheel trucks onto the rails, and the caboose was then carefully lowered into position over the wheels.

Preliminary work was done on the caboose by Gary Jacobs, Bill Smith, Delbert Pfohl, and Bob Rose who removed the plywood siding and covered the roof.

In 1979, a few of the society's members resolved that the caboose should not set through another "Memorial Day Fair" without being scraped and painted, and on May 19, 1979, the 1st coat of red paint was applied with the following persons doing the work: Fenton Cole, Fred Berry, Carole Schnoor, Helen Dinse, Edgar Culverwell, Ed Hastings, Darrell Smith, Art Schnoor, Bob Rose, and Don and Millie Croop. The N.Y. Central lettering on the sides was later applied by Harold Fitzsimmons of Cambria.

Burt Jennings of Wilson is currently in charge of the caboose renovation program, and he has been principally responsible for attaching new steps; repairing the platforms; painting the entire structure inside and out; installing new windows; and sealing and waterproofing the roof. It is presently planned to replace the worn siding. (Continued on page 2)

\* \* \* \* \*

American railroads are now phasing out the once familiar caboose which, for many years, served as a rolling office on wheels; or ferried work crews from one place to another. With computers taking over, the caboose is destined to become as extinct as the Dinosaur.

Thank to Burt Jennings and his helpers, the 1903 caboose is being preserved for future generations, and may someday be one of the museum's rarest attractions.

\* \* \* \* \*

SAVE OUR HOSPITAL:

Now is the time to act. Don't sit quietly by and let the state reduce the beds in your Inter-Community Hospital at Newfane. Write a letter to Gov. Mario Cuomo and state your reasons why you think the Newfane Facility should be kept open. You can make a difference. Send your letter to the Executive Chamber, Capitol Building, Albany, NY 12247.

\* \* \* \* \*

IN MEMORIAM:

The society sadly notes the passing of two of its honorary members, Albert "Bert" Israel and his wife, Minnie Miller Israel, both residents of the Fairchild Nursing Home in Lewiston. "Bert", 104, died February 1, 1987, and Minnie, 98, followed him on February 14, 1987.

The Israels are survived by a daughter, Mrs. Elwin (Garnette) Upton; a son, Bernard (Rena) Israel, both of Wilson; also 2 grandchildren, 2 great-grandsons, and nieces and nephews.

The Israels operated a fruit and vegetable farm on Brayley Road, and were recently honored for being the oldest living married couple in New York State. Interment was at North Ridge.

\* \* \* \* \*

PLANNING BOARD REORGANIZED:

The Board of Directors have appointed the following members to the long range planning board: Whit Barnum, Chrm., Lois Jennings, Curator, John Myers, Arthur Schnoor, Edward Hastings, Norm MacAskill, and Donald Burrows.

\* \* \* \* \*

FINAL TOUCH:

Art Schnoor has been making a cupolo for the new transportation building. It will not only dress up the appearance of the building, but will also contain outside speakers. Audio systems are hooked up and maintained by John Myers.

\* \* \* \* \*

ONE HUNDRED EIGHT AND COUNTING:

The Wilson Dis. Soc. is proud to congratulate Ida Rohring Ereon, who celebrated her 100th birthday at the Newfane Health Facility, Wednesday, February 18, 1987.

Ida was born on the Brayley Road in 1879, and following her marriage to Seymour Ereon, participated in many of the shows put on in the old Albright Opera House. She also enjoyed attending the dances on Sunset Island and, after her husband and Henry Giles built the "Gen" Theater on Young Street, could be seen helping out on the ticket window.

She cherishes the hundreds of cards she has received from her friends and neighbors, and is especially proud of those sent to her by Presidents Ford, Carter, and Reagan.

\* \* \* \* \*

DAYS OF THE "TIN LIZZIE":

Bob Rose recently recalled some of the early autos that were once seen on the streets of Wilson, but no doubt many would be unfamiliar to the present-day generation.

One model was the black 4-door Lexington with wire wheels owned by Mrs. Miller of the Miller and Brown store. Another was a 1915 4-door Baby Grand Chevrolet driven by his uncle, Ray Burton.

He said that "Vic" Berlin, former town of Wilson supervisor, drove a 1926 6-cylinder Marmon, and that the car was later owned by Elwin Upton. It seems that when Elwin acquired the car, the power train gave out and he had trouble getting a new part. He was finally able to get one that was made for a McCormick tractor, and drove the Marmon for many years after.

Some other models that would be strangers in to-day's showrooms might include the snappy 1920 4-cylinder 4-door Scripps Booth Roadster owned by Ersel McCormick of Lake Road, or the 1919 Buick 4-passenger Club Coupe sported by Charles Tugwell, proprietor of the former Fedonia Preserving Company of Wilson.

Leonard Tabor learned to drive on a brand new 1922, 7 passenger Nash Touring Car, and George Cooley of Lockport used to drive a 1922 Liberty back and forth to Wilson.

Today, some models like the Overland, Oakland, Paige, Graham, DeSota, Essex, and model T Ford are only memories, but although General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford have produced models that are now obsolete, they are still the giants of the auto industry--despite foreign imports.

\* \* \* \* \*

A NOTE OF THANKS:

The society is grateful to Roger Demmin for donating 50 bales of hay used as a frost preventative measure around the base of the new transportation building. Also, in spite of nasty weather, Ollie Clark and Art Schnoor have managed to get the doors in place permitting John Myers and Don Smithson to complete much of the electrical wiring. Ed Hastings and Don Burrows have offered to help paint the inside of the building when weather permits.

\* \* \* \* \*

ANOTHER MASTERPIECE:

This year's "Tulip" Quilt, which was appliqued by Joe Higgins and quilted by ladies of the Wilson Dis. Soc., is comparable to the many beautiful quilts made in previous years. It will be awarded to someone at the "Memorial Day Fair" along with a handmade afghan, carving set, and Society Recipe Book.

Donation tickets are now available, and because of the interest shown by our out-of-state members, we hope you will again participate. All ticket stubs should be returned to Betty Stimson, 50 Harbor Street, Wilson, NY 14172.

\* \* \* \* \*

SKELETONS IN CLOSET:

Rare is the person who doesn't do a little pruning before boasting about his family tree.

\* \* \* \* \*

MEMORIAL DAY FAIR ACTIVITIES PLANNED:

The 1st planning session for the Memorial Day Fair was held at the home of Nettie Stimson when it was decided to permit the Wilson Little League to hold a Chicken Bar-B-Q with servings starting at 1:00PM. Other food favorites will be served by the society starting at 10:00AM., and will include Homemade Chili, Salads, Pies, Funnel Cakes, Candy, Hot Dogs, Popcorn, and beverages including coffee, tea, lemonade, and Pfeiffer's Loganberry Drink.

A variety of exhibitions, musical programs, and craft demonstrations are planned with special attention given to the quilt drawing and large "flea market" which will feature over 150 dealers in antiques, crafts, and collectibles.

The Fair is expected to be underway by 9:00AM, Monday, May 25th, and in addition to free parking and admission, shuttle bus service will be provided to and from the village.

So far, the following have volunteered to be chairpersons: Wanda Burrows, food; Gail Walders, fishpond; Lucy Monroe, candy; Melinda Hutchison, cotton candy; Judy Zauner, coffee; Jane Demmin, flea market; Carol Smith, funnel cakes; Sue Schultz, popcorn and lemonade; Christine Kelman, membership; Doris Klees, Ways & Means; Art Schnoor, hot dogs; George Linnabery, antique cars; Lois Jennings, museum; Burt Jennings, caboose; Maxine Jones, green salads; Ron Zauner, mark grounds; Nettie Stimson, dealers; Darrell Smith, movies; Betty Stimson, quilt; Norm MacAskill, publicity; Mary Clark, Chili; Millie Croop, ads; Edward Hastings, cleanup; Food supervision, Lois Barnum; Emma Lou Reppentine, supplies; Clark Stimson, entertainment; Don Croop, announcements; John Myers, troubleshooter; Don Burrows, R.A.C.E.S; and the Wilson Masons will have an information tent and distribute balloons.

\* \* \* \* \*

NEW MEMBERS:

It is a pleasure to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Jon Williams of Ransomville as members of the soc.

\* \* \* \* \*

LET'S NOT BE CARELESS:

Our Curator reminds us that some one with key access to the museum, has been careless about turning off the lights, and on a couple occasions she has had to stop at night to do so.

Members who open the museum, of course, are responsible for it and, energy costs being what they are, it is most important that you turn down the heat and turn the lights off before leaving the premises.

\* \* \* \* \*

MUSICAL TREAT:

Members were given a special treat at the February meeting when Lynda Williams, music instructor at Wilson Central School, presented an interesting program related to the various methods used in piano instruction. She was assisted by two of her students, Katie Moran and Melanie Barnum, who demonstrated some of the basic drills used in practise and, in addition, played several beautiful old selections.

Mrs. Williams also played several excerpts from well known classics, and the museum's upright piano has probably never sounded as well as it did the night her fingers glided over the keyboard.

We are indebted to Leo Volk, Beebe Road, who tuned the piano prior to the meeting.

\* \* \* \* \*

MARCH MEETING:

Mrs. Clifford (Lucille) Upton, a former teacher at Wilson Central School, will be the guest speaker at the March 16th meeting, and the subject for her talk will be "Ice Cream Parlors and Soda Fountains." Lucille hardly needs an introduction. She is a native of Wilson, a graduate of Wilson High School, and a member of the 1st Baptist Church of Wilson.

Charlotte Pease and Gertrude Marcks will serve lite refreshments after the program.

\* \* \* \* \*

INTERESTING STATISTICS:

The society appreciates the interest and support it receives from its members, so we thought you might be interested in the following statistics: We currently have 582 paid members; 92 Life Members, (13 deceased); and 20 Honorary members, (85 yrs. or older.) Total, 681 persons.

\* \* \* \* \*

MARCH CALENDAR:

Fair Committee will meet at Lois Barnum's, Maple Road, March 6th, 7:00PM.

Board of Directors will meet at Dr. Singh's Office, 400 Lake Street, March 11th, 8:00PM.

Monthly Meeting at Wilson Museum, March 16th, at 7:30PM.

Note: We wish to thank Dr. Singh for offering to allow the Board of Directors to meet at the Medical Associates Office, 400 Lake Street, during the winter months.

\* \* \* \* \*

LIFE MEMBERSHIP CLASS:

When the society established the Life Membership Class, it was decided that all funds would be placed in long term accounts from which only the interest might be used. Ninety-two persons have joined this class thus making the fund a good source of income. Some have used the fund for Memorials to loved ones, while others have given memberships in honor of special anniversaries.

A provision in the by-laws will allow the fund to be used as collateral for a loan should the society face some unforeseen emergency, but in view of its wide acceptance by our members, we feel the purpose for which the fund was established should be honored and maintained.

\* \* \* \* \*

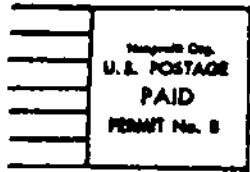
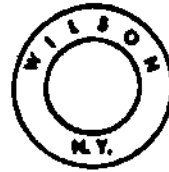
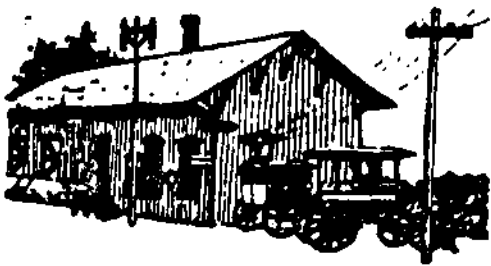
TUGWELL ISLAND:

In 1960, Tugwell Island was made into a Marina, and Red Clark, who owned the facility, built a new access bridge to it and dredged it out so boats could navigate around it. About this same time, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, spent \$62,000 to dredge the Wilson Channel.

\* \* \* \* \*

BON MOT: History repeats itself because nobody listens the first time.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Wilson Historical Society**

WILSON, NEW YORK 14172

**NEWSLETTER**

DONALD W. CROOP, Editor

LIBRARIAN  
WILSON CENTRAL SCHOOL  
WILSON, NY 14172

APRIL 1987 Vol. 16 No. 4  
(Coleman Press)

**ROADS HELPED BUILD NIAGARA FRONTIER:**

In 1800, Joseph Ellicott, Chief Surveyor for the Holland Land Co., realized that roads had to be built if settlers were to be attracted into the "Purchase". Prior to the war of 1812, only two roads connected our present Niagara County with eastern New York State, the Lewiston Trail and the Ridge, (Rt. 104). The roads were little more than quagmires during the rainy seasons, so the Holland Co. made improvements to both so the settlers would find it easier to immigrate.

Many of Wilson's pioneers came by water, but those who used the Ridge had to cut new paths through the woods to reach their lands. Stories handed down reveal that their most trusted possession was their axe which was often used to widen the trails so the wagons could get through.

The first road in the town of Wilson was built along Lake Ontario in 1811 from Fort Niagara to Somerset. It was very crude and Reuben Wilson was quoted by Historian, Orsamus Turner as having said, "Even when mills were built on the "purchase", it was easier to cross Lake Ontario for grinding than to travel on the new roads."

The 2nd road built in town was the Townline Rd, (Rt. 425) which extended north and south on a line separating the 7th and 8th ranges of the Holland survey.

The 3rd road in town was carved through the wilderness in 1816 from Youngstown to Van Horn's Mill, now Burt. This road shortened the distance between those two points, and became the route over which most of the Mill's flour was taken to Fort Niagara.

The "Slash" Rd., (now Maple) was the 4th highway opened in town, and was cleared or "slashed" through the wilderness by Daniel Holmes who, in 1818, contracted for the job. The slashings were piled high, dried and burned, thus giving the road its original name.

The 5th road was opened in 1824 by Joseph Marsh who settled near the corner of the present Chestnut and Beebe roads. The wagon trail connected his cabin to the area known as South Wilson, and up to 1870 was known as the Marsh Settlement Road.

Many of Wilson's roads bear the names of well-known early families such as the Daniels, Nelson, Fitch, Harris, Beebe, Palmer, Ide, Randall, and Brayley. Village streets also carry names of its early settlers like Dox, Wilcox, McChesney, Young, Warren, Haner, and Pettit.

In the 1900's, most of Wilson's roads were constructed of dirt and gravel and, during the rainy season, were always rutted and muddy. They were adequate, however, for horse and buggy, and were kept in good condition by the "Pathmasters" assigned to look out for them. It was their job to keep the roads as free of ruts as possible, and they did so with the use of a scraper or "hone" pulled behind a team of horses.

Oil macadam roads were introduced in Wilson in the 1920's, and these consisted of crushed stone mixed with asphalt-oil or lite tar. Most of Wilson's original 10 foot wide macadam roads were built with the use of stone crushers, rollers, scrapers, and hard manual labor.

The highway was first scraped and excavated, then covered with about 6 inches of fieldstone. Two inches of finer stone was placed over the base, and this was topped by two inches of fine crushed fieldstone. As each grade of stone was put in place, it was leveled off and rolled with a heavy steam roller.

In the 1930's, asphalt was used extensively for covering highways, and most local road-building was directed toward improving or resurfacing existing roads. During World War II, highway construction almost slowed to a halt, but after the war it was resumed. In the late 1940's machines for applying asphalt came into use making the surfacing of roads much easier.

The first highway superintendent in the town of Wilson was "Chick" Wilson, and he was succeeded by Ed Toenissen, Bill Rohring, Rudy Volls, George Upton, Fred Barnum, Arthur Zastrow, Ralph Evans, Lee Farquharson, and currently, Paul Karsten.

In the days of the Pathmaster, the property tax was the only source of revenue collected and spent by local governments, but with the increased use of the motor vehicle, an entirely new system of licensing, fees, and gasoline taxes were administered by the state and redistributed to state agencies and town governments.

As the automobile came into its own, the dirt roads that opened up the Holland Purchase have given way to smooth, paved highways that allow us to travel quickly from one community to another.

Truly a remarkable change from a generation ago when "Old MacDonald" drove his horse and buggy over some quiet, country lane.

\* \* \* \* \*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

The next meeting will be held at the Wilson Museum, April 30th, at 8:00 PM.

\* \* \* \* \*

TRAVEL WAS "TUFF" FOR PIONEERS:

In this Newsletter we have tried to show how road construction and the development of the automobile combined to improve the living conditions and lifestyles of everyone living in the Niagara Frontier. Many stories that have been handed down reveal how difficult it was for early pioneers to enter the region, and most of them who did had little inclination or time to write down their experiences.

One who did, however, was Asa Sanford, and Rex Stacy, a retired Wilson businessman, has a rare old letter written by Asa in which he describes some of the hardships endured by the Sanford family when they traveled from Connecticut to Tioga Co., NY, in 1806.

The 12 day journey was made with a pair of oxen and horse-drawn sleigh through the sparsely settled country bordering the Susquehanna and Chemung rivers. Dense forests stretched thirty miles back on either side of the road which often was covered with mud up to the oxens' knees.

When Asa was 19, he and some other young men decided to leave their Tioga homes and head for the famous Genesee Country they'd heard so much about. Their journey took them over the Genesee Turnpike to Batavia where they were able to "book" lands at the Holland Land Company Office.

Asa chose lands in the Barre Center area of Orleans County, and he described how he cleared them and improved his wilderness home. He noted that there was no aristocracy among the pioneers, and that everyone "was friendly and kindly disposed."

There were only wagon trails to travel on, but most people were contented to cultivate their fields, orchards, and vegetable gardens. Asa obviously liked the times in which he lived and in summing up his letter wrote,

"If there is any society where men fulfill the Divine Injunction, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself' it is among the early settlers of a new country."

Some members of the Sanford family came to Wilson in the mid 1800's, and several left their mark on the town including Charles Sanford who enlisted during the Civil War in Wilson's crack light artillery unit, Battery M.

In 1869, Henry Sanford was a member of the 1st Board of Education when the Collegiate Institute merged with Union Free School District #1.

Hervey Sanford opened a lumber yard and coal business in 1866, and was President of the Wilson Creamery. He also served ten terms as President of the Village Board, and was President of the Wilson Union Free School District #1 for several terms.

\* \* \* \* \*

NEW MEMBERS:

It is a real pleasure to welcome the following new members into the Wilson His. Society: Mr. Ashley Gale of Charlotte, North Carolina; Mrs. M. Patrick (Judy Gale) Sweeney, Los Angeles, California; Mrs. John E. (Kay Gale) Erskine of Racine, Wisconsin; Mrs. John L. (Barbara Gale) Cowan, of Hamburg, NY; also David Branch; Robert and Doris Motchenbaugh; and James and Diane Muscarell; all from Wilson, New York.

\* \* \* \* \*

MUSEUM TO REOPEN FOR VISITORS:

The Museum Comm., under the direction of Norm and Martha MacAskill, will arrange a special display for the reopening date of the museum on April 5th entitled, "Glass Jars and Stoneware."

Mrs. Jennings, curator, said that the exhibit, which is on loan from a private collector, will be on exhibit during visiting hours, Sunday afternoons from 2 to 4 PM. There is no admission charge, but donations are gratefully received.

\* \* \* \* \*

APRIL HOSTS & HOSTESSES:

Spring has sprung and it's time to open the museum again. Clara Marcks, Chrm., has arranged for the following couples to greet you: April 5th, Don and Wanda Burrows; April 12th, William and Lois Davis; April 19th, Leonard and Marion Tabor; and April 26th, Ron and Sue Schearer.

\* \* \* \* \*

MEMBERSHIP NEWS:

Annual memberships in the Wilson Historical Society expire on April 30th, and for your convenience we are enclosing a renewal application with this Newsletter. We urge that you please consider returning them promptly to our treasurer. There has been no increase in dues for 15 years, and with your continued support there shouldn't be.

\* \* \* \* \*

BASTIONS OF FREEDOM:

There are two forts in New York State that were especially significant in shaping the history of our nation, Fort Ticonderoga which controlled the portage from southern Lake Champlain into Lake George, and Fort Niagara which controlled the waterways into New France.

Under the supervision of Brion Dunnegin, Exec. Director, the lifestyles and early traditions of old Fort Niagara, as they existed under the flags of three Nations, are re-enacted and preserved.

Year around programs highlight the history of the old fort, and on May 2-3 visitors will be able to see the "School of Artillery", a training session for Revolutionary War period cannon firings.

\* \* \* \* \*

AUTO CLUB WILL VISIT MUSEUM:

On Sunday, May 3rd, the Eastern Region of the Auto Club of America plan a visit to the museum around 1:00 PM to look over the society's collection of old cars. George Linnabery and Bob Rose will serve as hosts for the group in the transportation building, and John and Eleanor Myers will greet guests in the museum proper. Regular visiting hours will be scheduled for the usual visiting hours from 2:00 to 4:00 PM.

\* \* \* \* \*

**BICENTENNIAL OF THE CONSTITUTION:**

It has been said that the easiest form of government to run in the world is a dictatorship because its citizens need only to know how to obey orders. The hardest form of government, on the other hand, is a well-run democracy because it requires dedicated and honest leaders, elected by its citizens to serve the electorate.

Democracy has survived in America for over two hundred years because its Constitution, written in 1787, stands to this day as one of the best guides to government by law that has ever been written.

This year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of that document which has proved itself remarkably adaptable to the many changing conditions that have occurred in our Country.

Eleanor Myers, Town Historian, has announced that she plans to prepare a special exhibit pertaining to the Constitution for inclusion at this year's Memorial Day Fair. Like many of us, she feels that attention should be drawn to this very important Safeguard of our Freedoms here in America, The Constitution.

\* \* \* \* \*

**IN MEMORIAM:**

Edna L. Winter Regnet, 68, died at her home in Gettysville, March 10, 1987, and she is survived by two daughters, Mrs. James (Ann Marie) Riester of Pendleton, and Mrs. Norman (Maria Ann) Wahl of Amherst.

Mrs. Regnet was a graduate of Tonawanda High School, and was organist at St. Pius X Church which she helped found. She was also President and founder of the Wild Flower Soc. of the Amherst Old Country Museum; past president of A.J. Jurek Post 1672, American Legion Ladies Auxiliary; the Buffalo Botanical Society; the Wilson His. Soc. since 1984; and was also well known as a folk singer, guitarist, and poet.

She was interred in Good Shepard Cemetery at Pendleton, NY.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MEMORIAL DAY FAIR NOTES:**

A meeting of the fair comm. was held in March at the home of Lois Barnum when it was decided to honor a request by Wilson's Little League to move up the serving time for the Chicken Bar-B-Q to 12:30 PM. It was also announced that Katherine Frerichs will take charge of the museum kitchenette, and Christine Goodman will supervise the tables in the food building.

Betty Stimson, quilt chrm., announced that the beautiful new "Tulip" quilt will be on display in the Town Hall for one month, and later hopes to exhibit it in the window of the Hamilton and Clark Furniture Store.

The next meeting of the museum comm. will be at the museum, April 30th, at 7:00 PM.

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**RECENT ACQUISITION:**

Ms. Marjorie Batt of N. Tonawanda has given the museum a Victorian Branched Hanging Light Fixture.

\* \* \* \* \*

**APRIL MEETING:**

Tom Sharpe III, a charter member of the society, will be the guest speaker at the regular monthly meeting, April 20th, at 7:30 PM. The subject of his talk will be "Migs, Quoits, and Croquet." Refreshments will be served after the meeting by Emma Schrader, Chrm., and Edna Robinson.

\* \* \* \* \*

**LIBRARY EXPANSION PLANNED:**

Because of cramped quarters and lack of shelf space, plans are underway to enlarge the present library by installing a doorway through the west wall into the present rest rooms. This area will then be used for book storage, and possibly a research room.

The stairway to the basement will be remodeled to contain two new restrooms, and access to the cellar will be made through an outside entrance.

\* \* \* \* \*

**NEW PLAYGROUND PROPOSED:**

A Thomas Marcks School Playground committee, chaired by Kathy Phillips Kraatz, has been formed to get support for a new, more safely designed playground for Wilson youngsters. Whitney Barnum, Pres., appointed Diane Albright, Lloyd Evans, Robert Dinse, and Mildred Croop to represent the historical society at a design day meeting of the group in March.

\* \* \* \* \*

**THUMBNAIL SKETCH:**

William Wilson, who was born in Whitby, Ontario, in 1858, came to Wilson when he was two years old. When he grew up he married Welthy Phillips of Youngstown in 1878, then became a fisherman and boat livery operator. He was well known around the village as "Uncle Billy".

Two brothers, Fred and Merle Wilson, and two sisters, Mrs. Elysa Myers and Mrs. Jenny Moon made up the immediate family. He also had a stepbrother, Frank Myers, and two step sisters, Mrs. Lottie Myers and Mrs. Ida Hill. William died in 1942 and is buried in Greenwood.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MARCH MEETING:**

Mrs. Clifflord (Lucille) Upton gave a very interesting talk on the history of soda fountains and showed many rare old pictures which brought back memories of marble ice cream parlors, carbonated drinks, glass-covered tables, and beautiful, ornate fountains.

\* \* \* \* \*

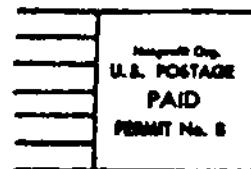
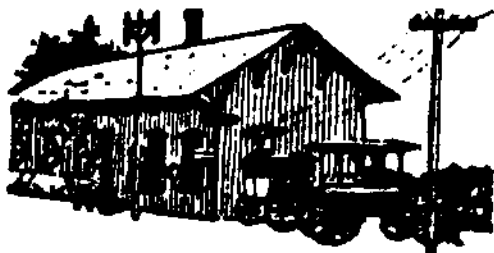
**CALENDAR:**

- April 8th: Board of Directors will meet at museum at 8:00 PM.
- April 14th: Delphic Circle will meet at museum at 8:00 PM.
- April 20th: Regular Monthly Meeting at museum at 7:30 PM.
- April 30th: Memorial Day Fair Committee will meet at museum at 7:00 PM.

\* \* \* \* \*

**BOW MOT:** You are never too old to learn new mistakes.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Wilson Historical Society**

WILSON, NEW YORK 14172

**NEWSLETTER**

DONALD W. CROOP, Editor

MAY 1987 Vol. 16 No.5  
(Coleman Press)

ELEANOR MYERS, TOWN HISTORIAN  
215 LAKE ST.  
WILSON, NY 14172

**ROCK HARVEST**

In the early 1800's, the town of Wilson was covered with great stands of oak and black walnut trees, but as these gave way to new homes, orchards, and croplands, much of the rich soil was found to be covered with large numbers of cobblestones. The early settlers were experts at living off the land, so it can be readily seen why some took advantage of the cobbles and used them to build houses.

Going back thousands of years, it is said that the Lake Ontario Plain once formed the bed of old Lake Iroquois with its southern shore extending to the Ridge. As the waters receded to the present Lake Ontario shoreline, great quantities of water-washed cobbles were left on the lands where future pioneers would build their homes.

The cobbles were a great nuisance to the farmers who cleared the land and tilled the soil, so many of the stones were gathered up and dumped along fence rows. Many of them were later used to build roads, but as early as 1825 another use was found for them.

The masons, who lost their jobs when the Erie Canal was completed, saw the possibility of using the cobbles to build permanent homes for the settlers. The idea caught on, and soon many different types of cobblestone buildings began to take shape on the Ontario Plain with most of them being completed in the forty year period prior to the Civil War.

The typical cobblestone wall was generally 18 inches thick, and was made with large stones in a variety of sizes. Usually, only the outer facing of the front wall was constructed with smaller stones, and these were obtained by carefully grading them to size by passing them through iron rings or holes cut in boards. As the masons perfected their craft, smaller stones of various sizes and colors were used to create special effects such as the herringbone pattern which was achieved by using small oval shaped stones.

The corners of the buildings were formed by using large, smooth, square-cornered stones called "quoins", and the cobblestone facing was determined by the thickness of the "quoin". The horizontal cross pieces over the doors and windows carried the weight of the structure above them, and they were called "Lintels".

Several historic old cobblestone buildings originally built in Wilson were either torn down or destroyed by fire including the "Ontario Hotel", the "Pettit Street School", the original "First Baptist Church", and the old "Collegiate Institute." There are eight cobblestone and five fieldstone houses remaining in Wilson, and it is believed that the quality of the mortar used by the masons is the reason why so many of the old structures are as sturdy now as when originally built.

Perhaps the most celebrated cobblestone building in the village is the Luther Wilson House which was built at the Four Corners in 1844. It was erected on the site of the first schoolhouse in the village, and Luther Wilson and his descendents lived in it for many years.

The old home was later acquired by a group of Wilson Businessmen who turned it into the "Wilsonian Club", an exclusively-male organization. It was completely equipped with three bowling alleys in the basement, and the 2nd floor of the south wing was turned into an elaborate banquet hall. A beautiful porch along the southwest side was sometimes used as a bandstand when Lake Street was roped off for dances. This porch was removed in 1949.

When the Wilsonian Club disbanded, the property was purchased in 1928 by Bill Kirchoff. He later sold it to Dwight Wilson who started a restaurant there. The property was later acquired by Howard and Dorothy Fitzgerald who proceeded to redecorate and operate the place as a cheerful hostelry known as the "Wilson House Hotel".

Today, Mr. and Mrs. John Hope of Wilson carry on the tradition, and for those who like to dine in pleasant, historic surroundings, the "Wilson House Restaurant and Hotel" is open seven days a week serving breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

In 1976, as a bicentennial project, the Wilson Historical Society mapped out a "Cobblestone Trail", and identified each house with a brass plaque over its entranceway. Anyone interested in following the "Trail" may obtain information and descriptive brochures by stopping in at Nettie Stimson's Barn Shop, 578 Lake Street, Wilson.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MEMBER IN THE NEWS:**

Congratulations to Marlene Dinse, School Nurse, who was recently awarded an Honorary Membership in the Ransomville PTA for outstanding service and dedication to area children.

\* \* \* \* \*

**BOARD OF DIRECTOR MEETING:**

The next meeting of the Board will be held at the museum, May 13th, 1987 at 8:00 PM.

\* \* \* \* \*

1987 MEMORIAL DAY FAIR:

On Monday, May 25th, from 10:00 to 5:00 PM, the Wilson Historical Society will sponsor its 15th annual Memorial Day Fair at the museum grounds on Route 425. The Fair, organized in 1973, was designed as a way of meeting operating costs, and thanks to the fine attendance and support from area residents, has done so successfully each year.

This year's fair committee anticipates that over 150 dealers of antiques and other collectables will attend, and special attention is being placed on a donation-drawing for the society's beautiful hand-made Tulip Quilt.

The society will also dispense a variety of home-made foods including Chili, Funnel Cakes, Salads, Pies, Candies, Hot Dogs, Popcorn and beverages. In addition, a special Chicken Bar-B-Q dinner will be sponsored by Wilson's Little League, with servings starting at 12:30 PM.

The society must depend on the continued support of its members and friends to provide the baked goods necessary, and the fair committee will make it easier for you to furnish this year by accepting pies, baked goods, etc. on Sunday afternoon--the day before the fair. You may, if you prefer, also bring your contributions on the morning of the fair.

Donations for the society's "flea tent" can be dropped off at either Jane Demmins or Edna Roses homes, or if you prefer, at the museum on Sunday afternoons from 2-4 PM.

Lucy Monroe would be grateful for any donations of ingredients or completed home-made candies, and if you're a "green thumb" enthusiast, Jane Pease will be happy to accept your plants at the plant booth on the morning of the fair.

Featured in the museum again this year will be a special rug-weaving craft demonstration by our own loom expert, Winnie Fischer. The society's rare, home-made Donner Loom will be on display, however, Mrs. Fischer will demonstrate her weaving techniques on her own personal loom. As part of this interesting demonstration, she will allow interested or inquisitive persons to try their hand at operating her loom.

According to Clark Stimson, a tentative entertainment program has been scheduled to start at 10:30 AM with a performance by the "Lockport Kitchen Bag Ladies" of the Lockport Senior Citizen Centre.

At 11:00 AM the "Niagara County Fiddlers" will play a mixed program including some old time favorites.

At 12:00 Noon the American Legion Post of Wilson will pay a Memorial Day tribute to the many veterans who've given their lives for our country, to be followed by a thirty minute concert by the Wilson Central School Band.

Finally, at 2:00 PM, a repeat performance is scheduled for the 35 member "Niagara County Fiddlers".

Childrens' attractions will include free movies in the "Fittro Shop", and free balloons will be available for the small fry at the information tent which will be manned by members of the Masonic Lodge of Wilson.

Free parking will be provided by Pfeiffer's Foods, Ontario Orchards, and the Farm and Garden Center, with overflow parking and free shuttle bus service provided from village parking areas at the high school, churches, and town hall. Busses may be flagged down enroute.

The public is cordially invited to attend this year's "Memorial Day Fair". It will be a great time to participate in one of the first big spring events of the year, and a chance to get those "winter doldrums" out of your system.

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FROM THE MAILBAG:

Charles Buchner, Wilson-Cambria Road, remembers the time he arrived in Wilson in the spring of 1919. He lived on the Daniel s Road and recalls watching Bill Rohring's boys haul gravel from Elwood Folger's gravel pit to improve roads for automobile traffic. He says the overgrown gravel pit is still visible at the corner of New and Daniel's Road.

\* \* \* \* \*

Commander Thomas Upton of Norfolk, Va., son of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Upton of Wilson, is retiring from the U.S. Navy following 20 years of service. Tom, his wife, Karen, and children, Dana and Bethany, will remain in Norfolk where Tom has accepted the position of Chrm. of the Math/Science Dept. of the Norfolk Christian Schools.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mrs. Beatrice (Stockwell) Hicks of S. San Francisco, Cal., was recently elected Regent of the San Francisco Chapter of the Daughters of American Colonists. Mrs. Hicks is also the District Secretary of the DAR and National Vice-Chrm., S.W. Div., of the Division of Genealogical Records Committee. She is truly a busy, busy, "Bea".

\* \* \* \* \*

INTERESTING EVENTS FOR MAY:

On May 9-10th, you may see the annual training sessions at Fort Niagara for soldiers and camp followers of the N.W. Department, Brigade of the American Revolution.

On Sunday, May 17th, the Newfane Historical Society will hold its annual "Apple Blossom Festival" at the Creek ground museum site, noon to five.

Monday, May 18th, the regular monthly meeting of the Wilson Historical Society will be at the museum starting at 7:30 PM.

On May 23-24th, a Fort Niagara Civil War Encampment will feature blue-clad Union troops as they garison the fort and train to meet the rebels--just as they did one hundred years ago.

May 25 is the date for our 15th annual "Memorial Day Fair" from 10:00 to 5:00 PM.

\* \* \* \* \*

RECENT ACQUISITIONS:

Mr. John Stone of Kittyhawk, NC., has donated the original Charter for the Wilson Boy Scout Troop started here in 1936.

Mrs. Lois Pepenhagen has donated an Improved Lockport Mason Jar with Metal Seal.

\* \* \* \* \*

IT IS SAID that a lot of people at the top of the ladder started climbing it on Saturdays.

**IN MEMORIAM:**

William E. Kirchoff, 91, died at his home in Sanford, Florida, Friday, March 10, 1987, following a long illness. He was the son of William Ertman and Lise Engleman Kirchoff of Salzburg, Germany, and is survived by his wife, the former Lucille Campbell of Wilson; 2 daughters Nixie K. Coleman of Oak Ridge, North Carolina; Gretchen K. Ramsey of Alexandria, Virginia; also a son, William Kirchoff of Sanford, Florida; and 7 grandchildren.

Mr. Kirchoff was a member of the Akron Masonic Lodge and Valley of Buffalo Consistory. He also was affiliated with the Holy Cross Episcopal Church of Sanford where funeral services were held.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MAY MEETING:**

Don Ramsdell, Wilson Postmaster, will be the guest speaker at the May 18 meeting of the society to be held at the museum at 7:30 PM. The subject of Don's talk will be "How Mail was Delivered in Wilson Years Ago."

Wally Goodman, Chrm. of the Nominating Committee, will also present a slate of officers and committee chairmen to be voted on at the annual meeting in June.

After the meeting, light refreshments will be served by Jane Demmin and Edna Rose.

\* \* \* \* \*

**NEW MEMBERS:**

It is a pleasure to welcome the following new members: Franklin Bickford, Newburyport, MA; William Barden, Watertown, NY; and John and Annabelle Benedict, Wilson, NY.

It is also great to be able to welcome some new junior members: Ryan James Eastman (9 mos) of Rochester, NY; David Mawhiney, Wilson, NY; also, Shawn, Kyle, Eric, and Kristan Mittlefehldt, Wilson, NY.

\* \* \* \* \*

**WILSON PERSONALITY:**

William Kirchoff was born at Alabama, NY on May 19, 1895. At the time, things were tough so his father began raising sweet peas and gladioli. As it turned out, the gladioli were the flowers which would later make the Kirchoff name famous.

Although the Kirchoff's first lived in Alabama, Bill's parents spent a number of years at Monterey, California, where two new glads were propogated--the "Kirchoff Violet" and the "New Kirchoff Violet".

Bill Kirchoff came to Wilson in 1926 and lived at Ferrin's old "Hub Hotel." It was from there that he operated his first gladiolus farm in Wilson, and later met and married Miss Lucille Campbell, a native of Wilson, and teacher at the Wilson School.

After opening a second gladioli farm at Sanford, Florida, he started several more at Driver, Virginia; Waynesville, North Carolina; Bradenton and Fort Myers, Florida; Alabama, NY; and Grant's Pass Oregon.

He became one of the largest growers and shippers of glads in the United States, and the location of his farms allowed him to have markets for his flowers year round. He was the first to ship gladioli bulbs from the west coast in carload lots, and his well-known logo was "Gladsof Unusual Merit."

Many Wilson families were involved in the Kirchoff gladiolus industry. Al Burrows, Manager of the Wilson operation, was later succeeded by Fay Campbell. Harold Albright, for 15 years, was bookkeeper for the business at Wilson, NY, Driver, Va., and Sanford, Fla.

Ernest Ganshaw was overseer of the Waynesville, NC farms, and Jim Piggins, father of Helen Borngraeber, was overseer of the operations at Grant's Pass, Oregon.

Bill bought the Luther Wilson House in 1928 after the "Wilsonian Club" disbanded, and later sold it to Dwight Wilson who started a restaurant. In 1933 he also purchased the defunct Wilson State Bank, and later resold it to Marine Midland.

Bill moved his family permanently to Sanford Florida in 1931 where he lived until his recent demise. During the last 20 years of his life he suffered with Parkinson's disease.

\* \* \* \* \*

**LOOKING AHEAD TO THE JUNE MEETING:**

How about it, folks! This year our annual meeting will be held on June 15th, and the program committee is planning an "Ice Cream and Cake Social" starting at 6:30PM.

**THE MENU:** Homemade and commercial ice cream for sundaes or floats with a variety of toppings. Also, home made cakes and coffee. (If you'd like a banana split, bring your own banana--cha, cha, cha!)

**COST:** \$2.50 per person OR One iced cake (layers if possible) OR 2 qts. Homemade Ice-cream.

**SIGN UP:** At May meeting or call Comm. members, Dorothy Linnabery, 751-6567; Barbara Mosher, 751-6497; or Lucille Upton, 751-6883.

**WE COULD DRESS IT UP PRETTY:** We need...Japanese Lanterns, strings of colored lights, candles in wind-shields, card table covers, ice cream sundae dishes, soda glasses & spoons. If you furnish these items, please mark them with your name.

**ALSO:** Please bring your own plates, dishes for ice cream, glasses, forks, spoons, etc.

**REMEMBER:** This is supposed to be an old fashioned ice cream social so be sure to bring your parasol, wide-brimmed hats, long skirts, "ice cream pants", panamas, or old feather boas. Who knows--we might even be able to "dig up" some entertainment.

**AND THAT'S NOT ALL:** A short business meeting will follow to elect officers, trustees, and committee chairmen--and also receive committee reports.

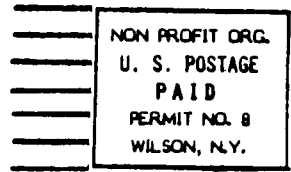
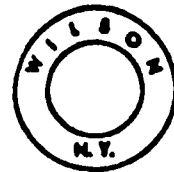
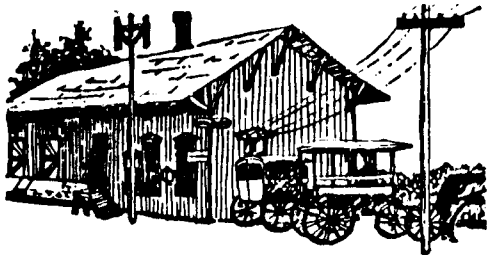
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**MUSEUM PROGRESS:**

During the latter part of April, the land was raked, graded and seeded around the new transportation building with help from Fenton Cole, Bob Thomas, Leo Klees, and David Branch. Drain system appears to be working well--a plus for the upcoming fair.

\* \* \* \* \*

**BON MOT:** You are never fully dressed until you wear a smile.



**Wilson Historical Society**

WILSON, NEW YORK 14172

**NEWSLETTER**

DONALD W. CROOP, Editor  
(Coleman Press)

LIBRARIAN  
WILSON CENTRAL SCHOOL  
WILSON, NY 14172

JUNE 1987 Vol. 16 No. 6

**SODA FOUNTAINS & ICE CREAM PARLORS:**

"Would you agree that Life was Sweeter and more Innocent in the days of Soda Fountains and Ice Cream Parlors?" That was the question asked by Mrs. Lucille Upton when she opened her talk at a recent meeting of the Wilson Historical Society.

Although a hard question to answer, we believe many old timers in the area might agree. There was something very nice about stopping in at establishments like the "Dew Drop In", "Middleton's Drugstore", and, (on the island) sitting on the porch of Babek's store. And too, who could ever forget the famous "Castles" of Lockport, the "Dairy Queen", the "Palace of Sweets", "Parkside", "Carrigan's", or the "Quaker Bonnet."

How refreshing were those old-fashioned Sarsaparillas, root beers, or cokes flavored with cherry, lemon, or vanilla, also those popular lemon and cherry phosphates, sodas, sundaes, and double double-dip cones.

The Middleton Drugstore and Soda Fountain was a familiar gathering place for Wilson's younger set, and they could often be found there for a cool morning treat. Frances Swick and Julia Stevens liked to visit the parlor after several strenuous games of tennis where they might win a "lucky sundae" with hidden price tag on it to determine whether one paid or got one free.

Marie Reynolds recalled one visit to the drugstore that wasn't too pleasant. Her mother had her soda "laced" with castor oil, and she said it took her forty years before she could disassociate the taste of the laxative with root beer.

Some other well-known Wilson personalities who often frequented the Middleton store of 50 years ago were the current Mayor of Wilson, Kenneth Welker; former long time postmaster, Harold Albright, also Frank Campbell, Merle Wilson, John and LaMont Hamilton, Patti Gifford, and Jerry Swann--to name a few.

One entered the drugstore between two large plate glass windows behind which colored balls of water were suspended. Inside the store you were greeted with booths along the walls and a row of tables and chairs down the middle with steel woven legs. Each table was also covered with glass under which tempting boxes of candy were displayed. (Note: One of these original table and chair sets now stands in the entranceway to the museum, and marble from the Middleton ice cream counter has been used for a counter top in the kitchenette.)

We find that the soda industry dates back to 1832 when John Matthews of New York began manufacturing carbonating machinery. A monument at his gravesite in Greenwood Cemetery, NYC, is a replica of his own "Cottage" soda fountain which was used in many other stores and is considered a distinct art form.

The 1st Lady, Dolly Madison, was credited with havingbrought ice cream into use in America, and the 1st wholesale facility for its manufacture was started in Baltimore in 1857.

The 1st ice cream soda was accidentally prepared at the Franklin Institute Exposition at Philadelphia in 1874 when Rollis Green substituted ice cream in place of cream when mixing a popular soda drink.

Strangely enough, an 1800 law made it illegal to sell soda on Sunday, so enterprising businessmen began dispensing "Sundays" or "soda-less sodas" instead. To make them more acceptable, the name was changed from "Sunday" to "Sundae", and the syrup, nut, and cream-topped treats could be purchased any day of the week.

Drugstores were a natural for housing the elaborate new soda fountain equipment as most stores already had ice facilities for cooling drinks. The ornate soda fountains of the late 1800's, however, slowly gave way to marble counter tops with soda dispensing equipment mounted underneath. The wall space that the artistic soda fountains once adorned was gradually replaced with large, decorative plate glass mirrors.

By the early 20th century, the soda fountain industry had become big business and a favorite hangout for America's teenagers. Their popularity grew through the 1950's as the American film industry featured them in many of their popular family type movies.

Mrs. Upton's interesting presentation set the stage for a special program this month at the annual meeting on June 15th. Starting at 6:30PM, the program comm. consisting of Dorothy Linnabery, Barbara Mosher, and Lucille Upton, will try to recapture the spirit and sociability of an earlier day with an "Ice Cream and Cake Social."

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**CONGRATULATIONS:**

Jennifer A. Weiler of Raleigh, NC, has been accepted as a junior at the School of Physical Therapy, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Jennifer is the granddaughter of Christine Kelman of Wilson.

\* \* \* \* \*

MIRACLE WORKERS:

Putting up the new "Dr. John F. Argue Memorial Building" could hardly be called a miracle, but on second thought it might come close.

For several years the society had the dream of erecting a new, larger building to house all the antique cars donated by the late Dr. Argue, and to also permit better use and display of memorabilia in the original building.

With this in mind, the society was able to save \$10,000 in its building fund with hope for a new facility assured when a supportive town board agreed to match those funds.

Tentative plans were drawn up, (but even with volunteer labor) it was estimated that more money would be needed to build the size building desired.

Through the initiative of the society's new president, Whitney Barnum, contacts were made with District Assemblyman, Joseph Pillittere, who assured the society that an additional \$15,000 for the project could be obtained from the National Heritage Agency. The plans for a new building were then immediately put in motion.

Millie Croop, treas., prepared the application and all the paper work necessary for the \$15,000 grant which was later approved by the foundation, however, since all anticipated funds would only pay for construction materials, the time had come to call the society's "miracle workers" into action.

She proceeded to contact, by phone, over fifty members who later donated from one to ten days of labor to the project with some key members contributing even more--a truly remarkable response.

Leo Klees was appointed to take overall charge of construction, and Ed Hastings, well known local contractor, supervised putting in the foundation and other cement work such as laying blocks.

Ollie Clark and Art Schnoor, both experts in the building field, shared the responsibility for the carpentry work, and John Myers, electrical contractor, took charge of wiring and audio installations.

Burt Jennings agreed to supervise the sealing and painting operations, and grading, seeding, and drainage systems were overseen by Whit Barnum. George Linnabery also drew up a map of the underground tilage system for future reference.

The society is especially grateful to the following persons who donated materials and equipment for the project: Nictor Utility Company, Michael White, Mawhiney Trucking, Lynn Barnum, William Hess, Roger Demmin, Adrian Frerichs, and Tom Rohring.

Everyone should be proud of this dedicated group of volunteers for without their help the building might not have been erected.

As a token of appreciation, a plaque bearing the names of all volunteers will be placed at the entranceway of the new building as a lasting memorial to those who helped build it.

\* \* \* \* \*

WE "GOOFED":

It is sometimes difficult to keep track of everything our volunteers are doing at the museum. In last month's newsletter we omitted the names of Bill Bartz and Sidney Pettit who were a very important part of the team who graded, raked, and seeded the area around the new "Dr. John F. Argue Memorial Building". Sorry about that!

\* \* \* \* \*

MEMBER IN THE NEWS:

Mark L. Huntington, Vice-Pres., S.C. Parker & Co., received recognition in the Union Sun & Journal recently regarding a book which he hopes to have published on the Big Band Era.

In his younger days, Mark performed with some outstanding musical groups at Olcott Beach, and also played with Harold Austin's Orchestra aboard the cruise ship, "Canadiana". During World War II he was assigned to several navy bands, and later put together one of the largest record and tape collections of the Big Band Era one might find in Western New York.

Although Mark was raised in Barker, he had close ties in Wilson once having served as Manager of Marine Midland Bank, Pres. of the Wilson Lion's Club, and Pres. of the School Board.

\* \* \* \* \*

DUES ARE DUE:

The treasurer has been "flooded" with membership renewals, however, a small number are still outstanding. If you find a "star" by your address label on this newsletter, it indicates that your membership in the society has expired.

Your \$3.00 membership fee is really a small price to pay to help the society preserve the cultural and historical heritage of your village and town.

\* \* \* \* \*

IN MEMORIAM:

The Wilson Historical Society extends its heartfelt sympathy to the family of Garnette Upton, 76, who died May 3rd, 1987, at Inter-Community Hospital, Newfane, following a long illness. She is survived by her husband, Elwin, one brother, Bernard (Rena) Israel, of Wilson, also several nieces and nephews.

Mrs. Upton was an active member of the 1st Baptist Church of Wilson, and former employee of the Lockport Felt Co. at Newfane, and the Bickford Box Co. at Lockport. Burial was at North Ridge Cemetery, Cambria, with Rev. Jeffrey Durham and Rev. Burton Smith officiating.

\* \* \* \* \*

We also extend condolences to the family of Glenn C. Hillman, 97, who died Sunday, May 24th, at the Newfane Health Facility. He is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Dale (Norma) Foster of N. Tonawanda; a son, Roger Hillman of Wilson; also 2 grandchildren and 2 g-grandchildren. He was a farmer in Wilson all his life and a member of the Exley United Methodist Church, and Niagara County Extension Service. In his younger days, he was a member of the old Ontario Band which was organized ca. 1910 and disbanded in 1925. Interment was at N. Ridge.

\* \* \* \* \*

BON MOT: The best years of one's life is when the kids are old enough to shovel snow, but too young to drive a car.

\* \* \* \* \*

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FAIR:

In 1973, Joe Higgins and Anna Mae Nevins proposed that having an antique/flea market might be a good way for the Wilson Historical Society to help raise funds for its annual operating expenses. The idea took hold with about 30 dealers showing up--considerably less than the 175 who signed up for this year's event. Although the day started out on the cool side, it was quite apparent by noon that thousands of people would attend and make the 1987 Memorial Day Fair one of the most successful ever held.

There was a great turn out by the local membership with over 250 persons accepting responsibility for the concessions and services provided. Most of the society's home-made foods were sold out by early afternoon, but long lines quickly formed at the Little League's Chicken Bar-B-Q tent as well as the Hot Dog and Funnel Cake stands.

There appeared to be great interest in the new Dr. Argue Memorial Building in which 20 antique and classic cars were displayed, and it was estimated that over 10,000 persons may have visited Wilson while the fair was in progress.

The Tulip Quilt was another big attraction, and all tickets were sold by 4PM. Larry Kam of Gasport was awarded the quilt; Jim Monroe of Ransomville received the Afghan; Jackie Zastrow of Wilson was presented with the Carving Set; and Pat Long of Lockport received a copy of the Wilson Historical Society Recipe Book.

Lois Barnum and Nettie Stimson, co-chairmen, wish to thank all Fair committees who did such a splendid job this year, also more than seventy local business persons who helped advertise it and provided other services or products.

\* \* \* \* \*

MEMBERSHIP "EXPLOSION":

Many new members signed up at this year's Fair including: Roy Pettit II, West Virginia; Cynthia Melcher and Audrey Perry, Niagara Falls; Beverly Clark Bailey, Lockport; Rheta Melcher, Lewiston; Charlene Rohring, Ransomville; and Janet Naslund and Jack and Winifred Terry, from Wilson.

Others joining last month are: Chester and Charlotte McArthur, Florida; Christopher Teague (8 mos) and Yvonne Myers, California; Marie Hewitt, Niagara Falls; Carol Douglas, Gasport; Donald Ramsdell, Newfane; also, John and Annabell Benedict; Allen and Anne Rohring; David and "Gus" Bradley; Wallace and Lois Ward; Robert and Doris MacBeth; and James Schots, all from Wilson.

\* \* \* \* \*

NEW LIFE MEMBERS:

Edward C. Allgeier, son of Charles H. and Ethel M. Allgeier, is a native of Wilson and was born March 9, 1924. He graduated from Wilson Central School in 1941, and later served aboard the Destroyer Escort, Robert F. Keller, during which time he was engaged in 5 major battles of the Pacific.

He worked for 39 years at Hooker Chemical, and after retirement, became manager of the Aquedus Treatment Plant-Chemical Waste Management, Inc.

Ed's family moved to Wilson in 1921 and he presently lives in the same house in which he was born. While in high school he worked at a gas station located on the site of the former Hinchliffe Vinegar Plant and present Basil Equipment Company. He also worked for a while for the late Maynard Pettit, local plumber. During the 1950's, he was active in Boy Scouts and 4-H, and has many interests including the Lockport Amateur Radio Club, Wilson Conservation Club, Martin Jennings Post, American Legion, and 40 year member of Ontario Lodge #376 F & AM of Wilson. Both Ed and Marilyn have been members of the society since 1973.

\* \* \* \* \*

Marilynn Allgeier, daughter of Howard and Ruth Kayner, moved to Wilson from Buffalo in 1937, and graduated from Wilson Central School in 1947. After her marriage to Edward, they had two children, Kathleen A. (Fuller), a teacher at Star Point Central School, and Michael E. Allgeier, an optical engineer at Hughes Aircraft in California.

While their children were growing up, Marilyn was active as a 4-H leader, also the MYF at Exley Methodist Church. For the past 22 years she has held the position of Town Clerk, and considers those years of working for and with the residents of Wilson the most rewarding years of her life. She is also a member of the Wilson Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star; the N.Y.S. Association of Town Clerks; Int. Institute of Municipal Clerks; and Wilson Chapter of the Inter-Community Hospital at Newfane.

Marilynn's father, Howard Kayner, was Town Councilman during the 1950's, and was later elected to the position of Niagara County Treasurer.

\* \* \* \* \*

TREES-PROJECT FOR THE YEAR:

Several organizations are joining in a search for historic trees in New York State. Co-sponsors include the N.Y.S. Museum, County and Municipal historian associations, and others who will nominate trees worthy of record. Wilson Hist. Soc. members are asked to make a note of any trees of historical interest or unusual size.

Trees will be one of the themes for the Niag. Co. Federation of Historical Societies exhibits at this year's Farm and Home Days celebration. Notify Norm MacAskill, 1st Vice-Pres. of the Wilson society if you can "dig up" any unusual information about trees in Wilson.

\* \* \* \* \*

SUMMER CALENDAR:

- June 10th, 8PM, Board of Director meeting at museum.
- June 15th, 6:30 PM, Annual Meeting, "Ice Cream and Cake Social" at museum.
- July 8th, 8PM, Board of Director meeting at museum.
- August 12th, 8PM, Board of Director meeting at museum.

There will be no monthly program meetings during July and August. Museum will be open Sunday afternoons for visitors from 2-4PM.

\* \* \* \* \*

SIGN IN AREA OFFICE: People who believe the dead never come back to life should be here at quitting time.

**THE GROTESQUE GARGOYLE:**

The gargoyle is usually shown as a grotesque bird or beast attached to a cornice molding with its main purpose to throw or direct water far from a building. Smaller versions of the creatures are sometimes used for decorations under a building's eaves.

Now one might expect to find gargoyles on some tall public building, but hardly as a conversation piece in some quiet flower garden in Wilson, however, if you were to drop in on the Matthew Henschels at their Randall Road home, you might be surprised to see one in their front yard.

In the 1960's, when the old Erie County Savings Bank was being torn down, Linda Clinton and her brother used to watch the demolition work at night. One evening they noticed some "gargoyles" dropping from the building, and they asked the wrecking crew if they might buy one for a souvenir.

The workers told Linda they could not be sold, but added that they were going on a coffee break and guessed if a couple gargoyles disappeared while they were gone, supposed there was little they could do about it.

Linda and her brother immediately began rolling two of the heavy granite "beasts" from the site, and to this day, both Linda and her father have one.

Linda is now Mrs. Matthew Henschel, and she is quite proud of the historic conversation piece which silently guards her flower garden on Randall Road.

\* \* \* \* \*

**SUMMER HOSTESS SCHEDULE:**

Clara Marcks, Chrm., has announced that the following members have agreed to serve this summer as Sunday afternoon greeters at the museum:

June 7th, Don and Joanne Wiltse; June 14th, Harold and Esther Albright; June 21st, Earl and Gerry Swann; June 28th, Ray and Lorine Allgeier.

July 5th, Howard and Leona Hunter; July 12th, William and Maxine Jones; July 19th, Lloyd and Sandy Evans; July 26th, Willard and Beatrice Rockwood.

August 2nd, Terry and Michele Stephenson; August 9th, Thoams and Gail Walder; August 16th, Jean Hayes and son, Wayne; August 23rd, Archie and Zilpha Petty, and August 30th, Ray and Pamela Groff.

\* \* \* \* \*

**FROM THE MAILBAG:**

Robert J. Mugele of Casselberry, Florida, hasn't been in Wilson since 1953, but he has very fond childhood memories of the "Island".

He is a member of the Talbot family of Pittsburg, and his g-g-grandfather built the old Talbot cottage on the island. He and his late father spent many happy summers there, and he recalls the good times he had with Walt and Floyd Wilson on their boat, the "Docksetter".

Mr. Mugele plans to give the Wilson Historical Society a water color framed picture of the island that was painted, no less, by J.J. Miller, one of the island's developers, on August 19, 1907.

\* \* \* \* \*

**RECENT ACQUISITIONS:**

Don Burrows Welding of Burt, NY, has donated a Railroad Workcar once used at Chisolm-Ryder, and the old vehicle has been reconditioned by Don and is in excellent shape--a real gem for the transportation building.

Carl Reichalderfer, Ridge Rd., Lockport, has donated a record of the Gaylord family taken from an old 1825 Bible, also a record of the Charles Gaylord, Jr. family. He also gave a Methodist Church Childrens Day Program dated June 10, 1888.

Mrs. Donald (Pat) Eick: One 1914 Cook Book published locally.

Mrs. Andrae (Janet) Sporleder: One year issues, "Colonial Homes" & "American Heritage".

James Harold, Washington, DC.: Last issue of the "Frontier Star" published Thursday, April 3rd, 1958. This issue ended approximately 80 years of publication of the Wilson "Star".

\* \* \* \* \*

**SUCCESSFUL OUTING:**

About 75 members of the Lake Erie Region of the Antique Automobile Club of America, driving 35 antique cars, visited the Wilson Museum on May 3rd where they enjoyed the friendly hospitality and accomodations provided by members of the society.

John and Eleanor Myers and Bob and Edna Rose welcomed the guests and showed them around the transportation building, and when the depot-museum opened at 2:00PM, Edgar and Eloise Culverwell greeted the visitors.

The club set up chairs and tables in the new building where they had lunch, and the society later received a generous donation from the group for use of the museum facilities.

\* \* \* \* \*

**HISTORY AWARDS:**

Bonnie Thiel and Shawn Ewald were selected by school authorities to receive this year's Wilson Historical Society awards for excellence in the study of History. The students were each presented a \$25.00 check by Whitney Barnum, President, at the Class Night Observance on May 29th.

\* \* \* \* \*

**FLAG DAY CELEBRATION:**

The sixth grade class of W. H. Stevenson School in Ransomville will present a Flag Day program at the school on June 12th at 1:15PM.

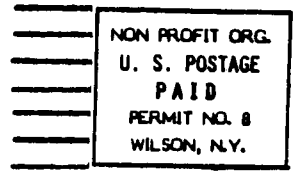
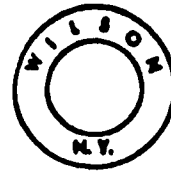
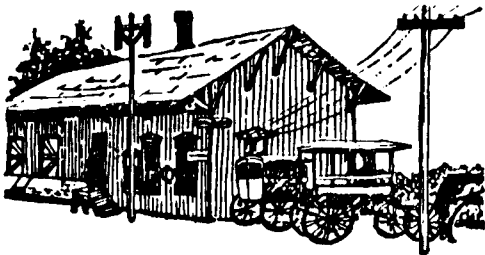
The theme for this year's event will be the U.S. Constitution, and the celebration will begin with a parade from the school at 9:45 AM.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MAKE RESERVATIONS:**

Reservations for the Ice Cream and Cake Social should be made with either Dorothy Linna-berry, Barbara Mosher, or Lucille Upton. Joanne Desrain and Marge Goodman will also serve as hostesses for the event which will start at 6:30 PM on June 15th.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Wilson Historical Society**

WILSON, NEW YORK 14172

**NEWSLETTER**

DONALD W. CROOP, Editor

July-Aug. 1987 Vol.16 No.7  
(Coleman Press)

LIBRARIAN  
WILSON CENTRAL SCHOOL  
WILSON, NY 14172

**WILSON PERSONALITY:**

(Note: We never met Phil Brown in person, but we corresponded with him and enjoyed receiving his friendly letters from Washington, DC. We were deeply saddened when his niece, Ellen Golde, informed us that he had been killed while taking an evening stroll. The following letter was mailed to us a few days before his tragic accident and, because of its historic interest, we are including it in this Newsletter.)

\* \* \* \* \*

"Dear Don: The May issue of the Newsletter brings a flood of memories. My Dad was one of the men that formed the Wilsonian Club, and others included Reuben Foote and Frank Campbell--for the life of me I can not remember the others. Six or eight of them met regularly on winter evenings to play cards, and Dad loved to go over for a couple hours after locking up.

The ceiling in the bowling alley was so low that tall men like Russ Hurlburt would sometimes hit it when they swung their arm back to bowl. The kids used "duck pins" and small balls, and these pins had a thick, wide rubber band around them.

There were two pool tables on the 1st floor in the southwest corner room. One was a billiard table, and I, along with Jimmie Hinchliffe and Ronnie Teague and others used to use them--but not to a great extent. I don't know why--it was fun and didn't cost anything. One time someone organized a "smoker", and the Evans twins boxed. I was not invited.

The band concerts were one of the highlights of my youth. Someone would rope off the street in front of the club, and pour a couple boxes of soap chips on the concrete in an effort to make it slippery. I would get so excited by the band music I would race around the outside of the clubhouse with the other kids, and it felt like flying--I haven't ever felt that way since.

An elderly man who lived on Franklin Street would wheel a popcorn wagon up to the curb in front of our store. I loved the popcorn but some of the women complained it was too greasy and that he didn't use butter. He made the popcorn over a burner, and what do you suppose he used for fuel?--kerosene.

I learned to dance at the club. I remember how desperate Felice Campbell, Helen Maynard, and Naomi Fitch were for some boys who could dance. They were delighted when some of us would finally make the attempt, but they sure had to put up with some clumsy-footed partners.

Your item about Bill Kirchoff sets off another train of thought. Bill had a Hudson Coupe with a rumble seat that was the fanciest thing in town. Sometimes in the evening he would take two or three of us for a ride to Olcott at 80 miles per hour---what a thrill!

I worked in Bill's gladiola fields for two or three summers along with Jimmie, "Dutch" Cornell and others. We rode on the rig that planted the bulbs, and crawled up and down the rows on our knees pulling weeds and later helping with the harvest. At one time I worked on the Crossman farm in a field that ran from Lake Road to the lake. Another time we worked on the Brown farm south of the road across from the house. This was the farm my Dad was born on. Other times we worked on the Singer farm east of Olcott, also the farm where Al Burrows lived.

Ernie Ganshaw used to pick us up on the way to work. We generally worked from seven to six with time off for lunch. Ernie's pride and joy was an Allis Chalmers tractor which I have a model of. What a smooth running thing it was. He changed the oil every day. We got \$2.00 a day for our labor, and Al Burrows made sure we put in a full day's work.

Last week I was at a meeting (in Washington) where people were talking about the days of the Great Depression. They said they knew people who worked at manual jobs in suits that they used to wear to the office--they couldn't afford work clothes. The summer that I worked on the Singer farm there was a man from Wilson who worked beside me wearing, believe it or not, Tuxedo pants.

I have nothing but happy thoughts about my days spent on the gladioli farms--that was where I learned to work and "hold my own" with my peers and older men. (Philip Brown)

\* \* \* \* \*

**IN THE NEWS:**

Congratulations to Matthew Goodman who received a certificate of distinction from John Hopkins University for scoring higher in mathematics than the average college bound 12th grader.

\* \* \* \* \*

**NEW MEMBER:**

We welcome our latest new member, Robert Pease of Barnhart, Missouri.

\* \* \* \* \*

TODAY'S GENERATION may be the first to be financially worse off than its parents, but as long as there are VCR's they may never know it.

\* \* \* \* \*

**HISTORY IN THE MAKING:**

Everyone should now be familiar with the Town Board's monthly publication, the "Wilson Chronicle", which keeps town residents up to date on matters of public interest. .

A few years ago, the board appointed a new Greenwood Cemetery Association and, chaired by Barbara Mosher, they have done a splendid job of cleaning up and beautifying the cemetery grounds with help from the Lion's Club, Boy Scouts, and Water Department.

Another organization making history is the group known as "Women Working for Conservation." Headed up by Ann Branch and Cindy Stanton, its members are working with the staff of the Tuscarora State Park to build and maintain a nature trail in the park.

There also appears to be more public awareness that Wilson has become one of the leading areas in Niagara County for sports fishing and boating. For this much credit is due to "Pinky" Robinson, the Conservation Club, and the Town Board for improvements being made for the convenience of thousands of fishermen visiting and bringing business to Wilson.

Plans are also underway to try to fund and build a new Town Park near the former disposal site on Chestnut Road in the southeast portion of town.

The Wilson Business Association has also decided to put out a new local paper, and the first edition was published recently with Catherine Myers heading up the editorial staff.

The Wilson Central School continues to make history each year, not only in academic achievement but in sports competition as well, with this year's girls' softball team placing second in New York State .

Harold Mosher, Supervisor, "hit the nail on the head" when he stated recently that, "Our parks, recreational, historical, and educational facilities, make this (Wilson) a very special place in which to live."

\* \* \* \* \*

**SUCCESSFUL FAIR:**

The Wilson Historical Society cleared \$9,068.77 at its recent Memorial Day Fair with about half the income coming from the food concessions: Hot Dogs, \$1760.00; Food Barn, \$1371.98; Candy, \$744.42; Funnel Cakes, \$399.87; Coffee & Donuts, \$391.21; Lemonade, popcorn, and Pfeiffer's Loganberry Drink, \$353.14.

The remaining income was realized from the Quilt, \$2,498.64; Dealers, \$1992.49; Plant Booth, \$350.55; Flea Market Tent, \$294.16; Ways & Means, \$169.75; Dues, \$112.00; and Fish Pond, \$39.67. There was also a \$110.26 donation from the Masonic Lodge of Wilson who sponsored the balloon concession for the children.

Expenses included Entertainment, \$560.00; Paper Supplies, \$371.97; Shuttle Busses, \$240.00; Porta-Jons, \$200.00; Advertising, \$89.40; and Paint (dealer spots), \$58.00.

The society is grateful to all its friends throughout Western New York who attended the fair and helped support it.

\* \* \* \* \*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

At the June meeting the Board approved the society's budget for 1987-88 as follows: Antique Cars, \$250.00; Caboose, \$300.00; Museum Comm., \$300.00; Historic Sites, \$200.00; Museum Maintenance (Lights, Heat, Water, Repairs, etc.), \$5,000.00; Office Supplies, \$150.00; Program Comm., \$200.00; Publications, \$950.00; and Ways & Means, \$250.00. Total, \$7,600.00

Approved request from fair comm. to purchase 20 folding tables at a cost of \$1240.00, and will investigate possible purchase of stacking chairs.

Approved request by Art Schnoor to purchase new, larger grill for hot dogs, etc.

John Stevens, Art Teacher at Wilson Central School, explained stamp cancellation program to be used to help celebrate 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. Board voted to sponsor the program.

Don Croop announced that Dr. George Badger of Lockport has agreed to give back his option for a right-of-way through the society grounds. This is exceptionally good news as it will permit unrestricted use of the "Fittro Shop" for display of acquisitions.

A motion was approved to start all future meetings of the Board at 7:30PM.

\* \* \* \* \*

**RECENT ACQUISITIONS:**

Carol Hawkins has donated 1 Gem, Jr. Camera; a Brownie Camera; Child's Electric Iron; Books, "Beatrice Potter"; "Adventures of Daniel Boone", 1843; "Trimmed Lamp", 1916, O Henry; also two 1877 Law Books, and a number of 4-H ribbons awarded at the 1919 Niagara County Fair. Old books were the property of Carol's grandmother, Maude Woodcock.

Harry Haven: Diorama of 1759 British Fort built on the Lewiston Portage. Scale model was constructed by Mr. Haven, an amateur archaeologist.

Elwin Upton: Old wooden Towel Bar.

Leonard and Marion Tabor: One pair of leaf-type springs; fuel tank from Wills St. Clair, Trunk rack, and Collection of Jars and Butter Crocks.

Charles Buchner: Miscellaneous photographs.

Nettie Stimson, 4 Metal Car Emblems; 1960 proceedings of Niagara County Board, supervisors

Eloise Culverwell: Womens and Childrens Clothing, ca. 1900.

Emma Schrader: Model of Great Horned Owl.

Esther Myers: Commencement Invitation for Wilson High School Class of 1910.

\* \* \* \* \*

**CONGRESS PLANS TO MEET:**

The Congress of Local Historical Societies will meet at the museum of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society on Saturday, July 18th, at 9:00AM.

Guests will be welcomed by James Jehle, President of the Erie Federation, and Norman MacAskill, President of the Niagara Federation.

An \$8.00 registration fee will include luncheon, workshops, lecture, and reception, and must be received at Nottingham Court, 14216, no later than July 13th.

\* \* \* \* \*

YOU ARE YOUNG at any age if you are planning for tomorrow.

WHEN CABBAGE WAS KING:

Paul Luckman was 8 yrs. old when he moved to Wilson with his parents, Elmer and Lucille Luckman, and remembers going to the townline school a year before it closed.

Much has been written about Wilson's fruit orchards, dairying, fishing, lumbering and boating industries, but Paul reminds us that farmers have also raised and shipped out thousands of tons of cabbage from Wilson each year. During the 1940's he used to help his Dad on the Walter Nelson farm pulling and transplanting cabbage plants, also hoeing, cutting, and carrying the cabbage by wagon to specially built bins at "Walter's Shop". The place was heated with a small wood stove and, if it got too cold, little round kerosene stoves were also used.

When it was time to ship the cabbage, the real "sloppy" job began when it was trimmed, bagged, weighed, and drawn to the Wilson Depot for shipment. To young Paul it seemed like the old depot was always filled to the ceiling with thousands of bags of cabbage. He also recalled that a coal stove and kerosene heaters were also used at the depot to prevent freezing.

Paul, a member of the society, graduated from Wilson High in 1954, and now operates the Luckman Logging Company at Walworth, NY.

\* \* \* \* \*

ANNUAL MEETING:

What a way to start an annual meeting! "Oodles and oodles" of ice cream served in any shape or form, sundaes, sodas, banana splits--name it and you could have it. All could be "smothered" with globs of whipped cream and homemade syrups in chocolate, cherry, or butter scotch flavors--to say nothing of hot fudge, nuts, fresh strawberries and maraschino cherries. The homemade ice cream was furnished by Janet Sporleder, "Chuck" Messersmith, Barbara Mosher, and Dorothy Linnabery, and a delicious variety of homemade cakes and coffee were also available.

Card tables were set up neatly with each having red and white checkered covers, and center pieces consisting of rose bud vases and colorful balloons overhead furnished by "Flowers by Jackie."

Leo Volk entertained everyone with lively background music on his accordian, and while society members contemplated having "seconds", Maurseen Moore and members of the Wilson Junior High "Musical", sang many of the old time favorites of bygone years.

\* \* \* \* \*

ELECTION RESULTS:

Officers and Comm. Chairmen nominated by Wally Goodman, Chrm., were elected at the annual meeting as follows:

Pres., Whit Barnum; 1st Vice-Pres., Norm MacAskill; 2nd Vice-Pres., John Myers; Treas., Millie Croop; Rec. Sec., Faye Pisello; and Cor. Sec., Helen Stevens.

Trustees to June, 1990: Jean Argue, Ed Hastings, and Burt Jennings.

Chairpersons: Acquisitions, Lois Jennings; Antique Cars, Jim Pisello; By-laws, Don Croop; Caboose, Burt Jennings; Genealogy, Celeste Crawford; Grounds, Elwin Upton; Historic Sites, Jan Sporleder; Housekeeping, Maryanne Sharpe; Librarian, Celeste Crawford; Membership, Christine Kelman; Memorial, Millie Croop; Memorial Day Fair, Lois Barnum, Nettie Stimson, and Millie Croop; Photography, Edna Robinson; Programs, Dorothy Linnabery; Publications, Don Croop; Refreshments, Emma Schrader; Sunday Hostesses, Clara Marcks; and Ways & Means, Winnie Fischer.

Appointments made by the Board of Directors: Curator, Lois Jennings; Nominating Comm. Chairman, Wallace Goodman; and Planning Board Chairman, Whit Barnum.

\* \* \* \* \*

IN MEMORIAM:

Philip Brown, 72, was struck and killed by a car on May 30, 1987, while staying at his summer cottage at Bethany Beach, DE. He was a native of Wilson and graduated with the Class of '31. He graduated from Niagara Univ. in 1936, and worked in the Information Div. of the Resettlement Adms. under the "New Deal". He served 2½ yrs. with the U.S. Army in Belgium during World War II, and later became Chief of the Information Div. of the Farmer's Home Adms. in Washington. He received the Superior Service Award, and retired in 1969. He later returned to work for the Information Div. of the Rural Housing Alliance from which he again retired in 1980. At Bethany Beach he was involved in town politics & also put out a Newsletter for the Bethany Beach Land Owners Association.

Mr. Brown is survived by his wife, Polly Swann Brown of Washington, DC, and 3 daughters, Kate Gillis of E. Greenwich, RI; Deborah Brown of Atlanta, GA; and Suzanne Kulik of Worthington, MA; also 6 grandchildren. He joined the Wilson Historical Society as a Life Member in August, 1980.

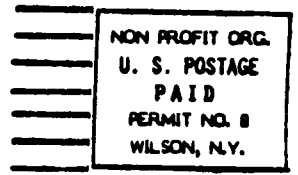
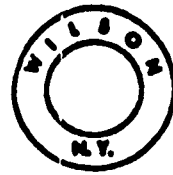
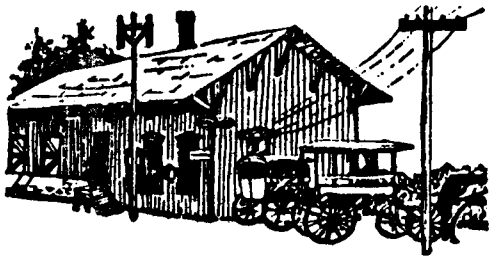
Donald Lort, 69, died June 3, 1987 at Buffalo General Hospital. He was born in Wilson, and later operated a gas station on Young St. He was a veteran of the U.S. Army Airforce in World War II; an Exempt Fireman, Wilson Fire Co. No.1; Past Comm., American Legion Post 836 of Wilson, also the Lions Club. He is survived by his wife, Shirley; a son, Lee; a daughter, Mrs. Timothy Williams, both of Lockport; also a step daughter, Mrs. Jackie Allgeier, Cal; and a stepson, Robin (Colleen) Slate of Lockport. At the time of his death he was Pres. of J. Ward Reid and Sons, and Vice-Pres. of Reid Petroleum Corp.

\* \* \* \* \*

Louis J. Swick, 97, died June 14, 1987 at his home in Cambria. He is survived by 2 daughters, Mrs. Dorothy Halstead of Newfane, and Mrs. Marjorie Sweet of Cambria, also 3 grandchildren. Mr. Swick was an active leader in the 1st Baptist Church of Wilson which he joined in 1902, and served as Moderator, Trustee, and Deacon for many years. He spent most of his life on his Willow Rd. farm, and was a member of the Niag. County Extension Service for over 60 years. He also was Chairman of the Niag. County Stabilization and Conservation Comm. for 18 years, and once served as the Committee's Representative to the United Nations.

\* \* \* \* \*

FINAL NOTE: Niagara Falls Journal, Aug. 3, 1895: The Niagara Falls correspondent for the Buffalo Courier Express reported that during the past year Wilson lost, by fire, the RW&O Depot, a big fruit house, the Presbyterian Church, the Ontario House, and American Hotel.



**Wilson Historical Society**  
 WILSON, NEW YORK 14172

**NEWSLETTER**

**DONALD W. CROOP, Editor**

SEPTEMBER Vol.17 No.8  
 (Coleman Press)

ELEANOR MYERS, TOWN HISTORIAN  
 215 LAKE ST.  
 WILSON, NY 14172

**BUSINESS GENIUS:**

Luther Wilson's first claim to ingenuity may have occurred during the War of 1812 when he was only 14 years of age. According to early accounts, George Ash, who lived west of the Wilson settlement, warned the settlers that the British were coming, thus giving most of them time to gather their things and flee.

About 25 head of cattle were rounded up, and Luther Wilson was given the responsibility of driving them eastward along the lake. Some had cow bells around their necks, so in order to keep the invaders from hearing them, he stuffed dry leaves in the bells. He was then able to drive the cattle 5 miles beyond Van Horne's Mill where they remained undetected. After the British burned down the mill and retreated, Luther drove the cattle back to Wilson.

When Luther reached maturity, he became the business genius of the family and, untiring in energy and spirit, started most of the public improvements in town.

In 1827, he started the hamlet of Wilson by laying out a single tier of lots along the north side of Young Street from Lake Street to the Creek.

In 1829, a tavern was added to his father's store and postoffice at the west end of Young Street which was often visited by the early settlers and soldiers from old Fort Niagara.

In 1834, Luther and his father built the cobblestone "Ontario House" on the southwest corner of Young and Lake Streets, and up to 1894, (When it was destroyed by fire) it was considered one of Wilson's oldest and best known hostelrys.

On Dec. 28, 1835, Luther was elected one of the trustees of the 1st Methodist-Episcopal Society in the town of Wilson at a meeting held to incorporate it. In 1838, a new frame church was built at the corner of Lake and High streets on land acquired from Andrew Brown.

Up to 1837, Luther helped his father as a merchant and miller, and in that same year enlarged the grist mill by adding steam power and two more run of stones.

In 1844-45, Luther built an attractive cobblestone home on the site of the 1st log school-house built in the village in 1820. The beautiful old historic home is known today as the "Wilson House Restaurant." It was also during this year that Luther was elected to a term in the state assembly.

1846 was a big year in the life of Luther Wilson. He established the harbor and obtained permission from the Secretary of War to build two 200 foot piers into the lake at the mouth of 12 Mile Creek. For the next 20 years, at his own expense, he dredged the channel by use of horsepower, and continued to make improvements until 1867 when the Wilson Harbor Company was incorporated.

Other improvements included a large store-house where he began buying and shipping grain and fruit; also a new shipyard where he built the schooner, Reuben F. Wilson, which was named for his son. That was the start of a new industry in Wilson, and up to 1875 about 20 two-and-three-masted schooners were built at the harbor by itinerant contractors.

Luther was also interested in education, and was the largest contributor among residents to finance construction of the Wilson Collegiate Institute which was incorporated by the Board of Regents, Feb. 19, 1846. He also served on the 1st Board of Trustees which included Simon Sheldon, Morgan Johnson, Andrew Brown, Robert McChesney, and Hiram B. Tabor.

Luther was also responsible for having Congress declare Wilson a Port of Entry in 1848, and Abram Vosburgh was named the first collector.

The village of Wilson was incorporated May 11, 1858, by an act of the state legislature, and at the time included 416 acres within its borders with a population of 715 persons. Luther was elected to serve as the 1st President of the Board of Directors.

When the R.W.& O. railroad came through Wilson in 1875, it was surveyed through the center of Wilson's former cemetery which was located directly east of the present depot-museum. Luther donated 8 acres of land near 12 Mile Creek for a new cemetery, and when his father's remains, among others, were removed from the burial site, they were placed in the new "Greenwood Cemetery."

Luther was interested in the military, and for a number of years served as Captain of the Wilson artillery company of the 66th Regiment, New York State Militia.

Luther was associated with the work of the Methodist-Episcopal church in Wilson, but also gave land on which the 1st frame Presbyterian Church; the 1st Baptist Church; and the North Ridge Methodist-Episcopal churches were built.

Luther Wilson was said to be loved and respected by all, and he died in Wilson in 1890 at the age of 92. He was interred in the cemetery that he started--Greenwood.

\* \* \* \* \*  
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BON MOT: If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

THE PATTERSON ROOM:

Visitors at the museum sometimes ask why the meeting room is called the Patterson Room. It is an easy question to answer.

Richard Patterson was a familiar figure around the depot where he served as Station Agent for a total of 33 years.

He and his family lived at 400 Lake Street, the present site of Dr. Singh's Medical Associates Office, which was in easy walking distance of Exley Methodist Church where Patterson taught the adult Bible Class for many years.

He was born in Lachute, Quebec, Canada, but his formal schooling was short lived. At the age of ten, he was taken out of school by his father and put to work in a grocery store. Young Patterson was extremely alert, however, and managed to educate himself in his spare time.

He became a pioneer telegrapher for the Canadian-Pacific Railroad, and started up a new station, (without any name) in the Canadian wilderness. While there, the Indians taught him how to hunt and fish, and also supplied him with furs for blankets.

The story was told how he courted his future wife, who worked as a telegrapher on the same line, by sending messages back and forth by telegraph key. They were later married, and in the early 1900's moved to Wilson where they made their home.

Mr. Patterson retired in 1934 and passed away in 1946.

\* \* \* \* \*

ANNUAL DINNER WAS SUCCESS:

Echoing the theme of an earlier program, "Sights and Sounds of Spring", the annual dinner reportedly pleased the 51 members who attended and enjoyed the menu of old fashioned Chicken and g ravy over home-made noodles.

Barbara Mosher and a committee consisting of Norma Ward, Emily McAvoy, Janet Sporleder, Dorothy Linnabery, Mary Gamble, and Mary McCoy, prepared and served the delicious dinner which was topped off with strawberry shortcake.

Some of the other meals that "tickled the fancy" of historical society members were the "Harvest Time" dinner; Road-Builder's Bucket Meal; Political Rally Pig Roast; Hobo Stew Meal; Parlor Game Basket Supper; and Ice Cream Soda-Fountain Social.

\* \* \* \* \*

RECENT ACQUISITIONS:

Henry F. Donner of Cleveland Heights, Ohio, visited Wilson recently, and donated a number of interesting items to the museum. Included were a Marine Sextant; Snake Bite outfit, "Snakes and Treatment of Snake Bites", which he used on a trip from South Africa to Egypt in 1933; also on a trip from Algiers to South Africa in 1948. Also "How to make good pictures" by Eastman Kodak; the Kodak Amateur Printer; Kodak Film Pack Tank; Dark Room Safety Light; Velox Color Outfit; and No. 1A Automatic Jr., (1926). "Pro-Caculo"--offspring of old "Abacus"; Log Duplex Slide Rule, and 3 Instruction Books. Also, Geologic Atlas of U.S.; Niagara Folio, 1913; and New Century Atlas of Niagara County, 1908.

Lloyd Duxbury: Stone Sink (ca.1850), which originally came from the Luther Wilson House. The 4'x32"x9" sink was later used by Lloyd's mother, Lottie Evans Duxbury. Also, a Carpet Stretcher and Nailer in excellent condition:

Helen Kepner: Early 1900's Electric Light Bulb; also a Lamp Trimmer, or Cutter.

Francis Danielewicz: Zerox copy of Incorporation Papers for South Wilson Volunteer Fire Company--1953.

Norman Pettit, Olcott: Post Cards showing Plumb's Bridge, Tuscarora River, and Sunset Beach.

Melvin Drake, Appleton: Photograph of Fittro Shop interior in the early 1800's.

Rachel Flagler, Lockport: Plush Carriage Robe in good condition.

Les Read, Sanborn: Photograph of Wilson I.O.O.F. members with identifications.

Leo Volk, Newfane: Copy of Wilson "Star", August 29, 1916 edition.

Kenneth Schuman, Lockport: "Raco" Hand-Boring Railroad Track Drill.

Nettie Stimson: 1988 photograph of the signers of the Constitution.

Beatrice Mensch (Stevens), Lockport: Two books, "Life on the Ridge" and "Saga of the Ridge", by J. Howard Pratt; "Lockport Today-1935"; "The Elms" (1913-14); "Schoharie Valley Lore", and Lockport City Directory, 1938.

Alfred Stevens, Lockport: Large Wooden Smoothing Plane and heavy Brass Cowbell, donated in "Loving Memory of Emerson J. Stevens", Randall Rd., Wilson, father of Alfred Stevens.

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MUSEUM TOUR:

About 20 summer residents from Niagara Woodland Campground, New Rd., Wilson., visited the Museum on July 6th, and were given a tour of the premises by Lois and Burt Jennings and Millie and Don Croop. They later enjoyed a bag luncheon outside the depot. Mrs. Rose Seider, owner of Niagara Woodland, accompanied the group who all appeared real interested in the museum exhibits.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE FITTRO SHOP:

One of the undeveloped buildings on the museum grounds is the Fittro Shop, so named for N. B. Fittro who, in 1899, advertised his business in the Wilson "Star" as follows:

"Blacksmith and Horseshoer--Carriage and Wagon work--Repairing of all kinds--a Specialty Shop opposite the R.R. Depot."

Ron Zauner is chairman of the Fittro Shop, and plans are being discussed to see if it would be feasible to put down a cement floor. Once the floor is done, the museum committee will be able to decide how the building should be used. It has been suggested that it might be restored as a blacksmith shop and display area for farm equipment.

\* \* \* \* \*

NOTICE TO "SUN BIRDS":

When you leave for or return from Florida and other areas, please notify our treasurer, Millie Croop, to keep your newsletter coming. The Postoffice does not forward 3rd Class mail.

\* \* \* \* \*

REFRESHMENT HOSTESSES for Sept. 19th meeting: Millie Croop and Judy King.

A HORSE, OF COURSE:

Most members of our society probably know that the 1st historic marker erected in town was the "Billy Sherman" marker on Wilson-Burt Rd. one quarter mile east of the village line.

The story of the old confederate war horse was researched by the late Dorothy Thilk, town historian, and dedication exercises were held at the grave site on Sept. 1, 1973. Attending were Rep. Henry P. Smith III, 39th Dist., Paul Hewitt, Chrm., Niag. Co. Board of Supervisors, Whitney Barnum, town supervisor, Harold Mosher, village mayor, and Dr. John Argue, Pres. of the Wilson Historical Society.

Jackie Lynn (Luff) Bryer, a teacher at Thomas Marks School and great-great granddaughter of Sgt. Lorenzo Pratt, who owned Billy, was also present and unveiled the marker.

Now some dubious person might ask, "Why a marker for a horse.?" It would seem suffice to say that old Billy was named after General William Sherman, and was buried with military honors by members of the Wilson G.A.R. Post who had fought beside the horse in battle. Iris that were planted on his grave continue to bloom to the present day which made it possible for Mrs. Thilk to locate the actual gravesite.

Ron and Judy Zauner now own the farm on which the historic grave was dug, and their family have kept the site in good condition ever since acquiring it. Frank Massing, Judy's uncle, has taken over the job of mowing and caring for old Billy's grave, and the society appreciates his interest.

After all, where else in New York State can you find a gravesite dedicated to the memory of a confederate war horse?

\* \* \* \* \*

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS:

Best wishes and a bright future to these historical society members who graduated from Wilson Central School, Class of '88: Christopher Demmin, son of John and Jane Demmin; Kimberley Hunter, daughter of Howard and Leona Hunter; Keven Reppentine, son of Dick and Emma Lou Reppentine; and Robert Zauner, son of Ron and Judy Zauner.

Melanie Barnum, daughter of Whit and Lois Barnum, was one six "Students of the Quarter" honored at the end of the school year. Melanie, who was President of the Sophomore Class, is also a member of the National Honor Society.

Congratulations to Wirt and Dora Wakeman who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary at the South Wilson Fire Hall on July 23rd.

Congratulations are also in order for Milburn and Marion Campbell who celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary at the Wilson Museum on August 13, 1988.

\* \* \* \* \*

NEW MEMBERS:

Please welcome these new members who joined the society during July and August: Shirley Ann Lewis, Yaupon Beach, NC; Mark Evans, Neptune Beach, FL; Robert Upton, Media, PA; Cynthia Vincelette, Norfolk, VA; Ruby Albright, Wichita, TX; Fred Oldeburg, Clifton, NJ; Don and Ruth Beutel, Newfane, NY; Harold and Ellen Wiepert, Ransomville, NY; Nancy Tussing, Ransomville, NY; and David and Martha Glaser, Wilson.

Also, junior members, Jared Williams, Ransomville; Matthew and Michael Evans, Wilson; and Jason, Andrew, Jonathon, Christopher, and Torin Cone, all from Wilson.

\* \* \* \* \*

THUMBNAIL SKETCH:

John Gould Webster, pioneer, settled on the Daniels Rd.. Wilson, in the early 1800's. In 1862 his son, John Francis Webster, enlisted in Battery M, 1st N.Y. Light Artillery, and served a three year tour of duty. He was discharged at Atlanta in 1864, and returned to Wilson where, in 1858, he had previously joined Ontario Lodge 376, F&AM. He died in 1905 and was interred in the North Ridge Cemetery.

John F. Webster, grandson of the Civil War veteran, joined the Wilson His. Soc. recently, and is considering donating some of his grandfather's Civil War artifacts to the museum as a Memorial so that they may become a part of the area's local history.

Battery M fought in over 60 Campaigns and saw action in some of the war's greatest battles including Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Siege of Atlanta, and Sherman's March to the Sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

IN MEMORIAM:

Clifford Upton, 69, son of George and Mazey Upton, passed away unexpectedly on July 8, 1988. He was a former plant manager for Bickford Paper Box Corp., and a deacon at 1st Baptist Church in Wilson where he sang in the choir for over 50 years. He was also a member of Masonic Lodge No. 73, F&AM of Lockport; the Wilson Volunteer Fire Co., and Wilson Historical Society.

He is survived by his wife, Lucille Swick Upton, and 5 sons, Tom (Karen) of Norfolk, VA; Terry (Gail) of Barker; Dennis (Kathy) of Kenmore; Robert of Media, PA; and Roger (Jody) of Rochester; one daughter, Cynthia (Richard) Vincelette of Norfolk, VA; and 5 grandchildren. Also, 4 brothers and a sister, Elwin and Maurice of Wilson; Laurence of Rochester; Melvin of Newfane, and Elizabeth (Borget) of Wrights Corners.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sherman Allgeier, 68, a member of the Wilson His. Soc. since 1983, died at Naples, FL, Aug. 2nd, 1988. He is survived by his wife, Mary Elizabeth Stone (Allgeier) of Naples, FL; a daughter, Christine Allgeier of Waverley, NY; a son, John of Charlotte, NC; 2 sisters, Ruth Takel of N. Tonawanda, and Dorothy A. Lort of Wilson. Also a granddaughter, Alanna Allgeier of NC.

Sherman grew up in Wilson and graduated from Wilson High school in 1938. He worked for Hamilton & Clark for awhile, and later became an undertaker at Waverley, NY where he was recently interred.

\* \* \* \* \*

SEPTEMBER MEETINGS: Sept. 8th, Planning Board, 7:30 pm at Whit Barnum's; Sept. 14th, Board of Directors, 7:30 pm at Whit Barnum's; and Sept. 19th, Regular Monthly Meeting, 7:30 pm at the Wilson Museum.

NEW LIFE MEMBERS:

J. Glenn Patterson, son of Bertram L. Patterson and Margaret Ellis Patterson, was born in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada. He attended the Brandon Central School and Collegiate Institute, and received his B.S. in electrical engineering at Queens University, Kingston, Canada.

He and his wife, Barbara, have one daughter, Judith, and they attend the United Church of Canada. He was also a member of the Officers Training Corps, and the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario. Glenn is the grandson of Richard M. Patterson, former well-known station agent at Wilson, and for the past 35 years has been associated with the Hydro Power Utility of Ontario, Canada.

\* \* \* \* \*

Judith Gale Sweeney, the youngest daughter of Ashley and Ruth Gale, was born at Lockport, Feb. 8th, 1929. She graduated from Wilson High school in 1947, and Lake Erie College in 1951. In 1955 she received a Master's Degree in social work from the University of Pennsylvania, and is currently Asst. Executive Director of the Children's Bureau, Los Angeles, California.

Judith married M. Patrick Sweeney, a chemical engineer, and they have one son, Donald Ashley who was born August 11, 1964.

\* \* \* \* \*

Marjorie Crossman Hurlburt, daughter of Stanley and Winifred Teague Crossman, was recently given a Life Membership in the society by her daughter, Mary Lou Young of Rye, NY.

Mrs. Hurlburt, a former music instructor at Wilson Central School, received her education at Fredonia State, the Eastman School of Music, University of Buffalo, and Albright Art school.

She has 3 children by her marriage to Russel Hurlburt, former owner of the Hurlburt Preserving Co. in Wilson, Mary Lou (Young); Carol Teague Hurlburt; and Hannah Jane Hurlburt. Marjorie resides in Bronxville, NY, where she attends the Episcopal church, and is Pres. of the Bronxville Womens' Club. She is also a charter member of Beta Lambda Chapter of Pi State, and in 1971 was selected for "Outstanding Educators of America."

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RENOVATION REPORT:

During the past 6 months, from Feb. 1st to July 1st, the following expenditures were made, however, money spent for general maintenance, (such as siding the caboose) is not included.

Town Highway Dept., \$1056.51; Village Water Dist., \$452.52; Frontier Stone, \$206.20; Taylor Lumber, \$214.30; Roger Winters, \$304.65; Sears Roebuck, \$145.40; Quermback Electric, \$27.82; Calkins Lumber, \$160.85; Horton Hardware, \$80.54; Carpet Collection, \$204.00; Lock City Supply, \$255.00; Creative Signs, \$526.00; Water & Electric lines to sign, \$86.32; Misc., \$150.48; TOTAL, \$4,128.67. (Labor was volunteered.)

\* \* \* \* \*

BOARD APPOINTEES & COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:

Under Article IV, Sec 7 of the Constitution and By-laws, the Board of Directors have made the following appointments: Lois Jennings, curator; Wallace Goodman, Nominating Comm; Whit Barnum, Planning Board; Lois Jennings, depot; Eleanor Myers, Barnum Building; Jim Pisello, Dr. Argue Building; Ron Zauner, Fittro Shop; Burt Jennings, Caboose; & Elwin Upton, Grounds.

Chairmen of standing committees approved are: Lois Jennings, acquisitions; Don Croop, by-laws; Celeste Crawford, genealogy; Janet Sporleder, historical sites; Maryanne Sharpe, housekeeping; Celeste Crawford, library; Chris Kelman, membership; Millie Croop, memorial; Nettie Stimson, Memorial Day fair; Clara Marcks, museum attendants; Edna Robinson, photography; Don Croop, publications; John Myers, publicity; Emma Schrader, refreshments; and Winnie Fischer, Ways & Means. (Program Chairman, pending.)

\* \* \* \* \*

BOARD ACTION:

The Board of Directors voted to put indoor-outdoor carpeting in the Barnum Building to make it more attractive for exhibits, and the area at the southwest corner of the room is set aside for a kitchen and the floor was covered with tile. The room will also have plenty of space for tables and chairs and will be available for events like the Memorial Day Fair or other occasions.

Before work on the floor was started, all tables and chairs were removed to the patio by Ted Bull, Tom Walder, John Benedict, Ralph Dinse, Fenton Cole, Gary Pettit, Leo Klees, Shad Yerdon, and Brion Woolston.

"Ollie" Clark and John Myers filled in the cracks and leveled the entire cement floor, and Bill Fritton, Gregory Mandeville, Tom Walder, George Lederhouse, and Don Croop, ground the floor smooth and cleaned up the dusty "mess".

The rug and tile were installed by Carl Bodie, Daniels Rd., Wilson, and Eleanor Myers, Chrm., and Lois Jennings, curator, are to be commended for taking the initiative necessary to get the job completed this summer.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nettie Stimson has been appointed by the Board to have full charge of loaning out the society's tables, chairs, and tent, however, approval of 2 trustees must be had before any items may be removed from the premises. By having one person in charge of signing out or signing in equipment, it is felt that better track of these items may be kept.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was also decided that a minimum donation of \$35 would be acceptable for anyone wishing to use the Barnum Building, and Lois Jennings, Eleanor Myers, and Nettie Stimson were appointed to set up "guidelines" for use of the museum facilities. These will be discussed next meeting.

\* \* \* \* \*

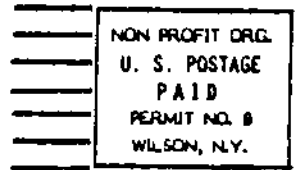
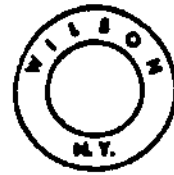
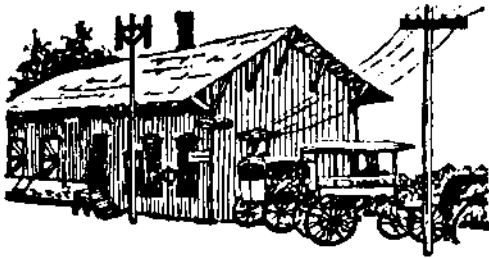
MUSEUM ATTENDANTS FOR SEPTEMBER:

Clara Marcks, Chrm., has announced that Sunday afternoon hostesses for September will be: Sept. 4th, Norm and Martha MacAskill; Sept. 11th, George and Mary Frances Miller; Sept. 18th, Gregory and Dena Mandeville; and Sept. 25th, Elton and June Kropp.

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FINAL THOUGHT: Live your life so you don't have to hide your diary.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Wilson Historical Society**  
WILSON, NEW YORK 14172

**NEWSLETTER**

DONALD W. CROOP, Editor

October 1987 Vol. 16 No. 9  
(Coleman Press)

ELEANOR MYERS, TOWN HISTORIAN  
215 LAKE ST.  
WILSON, NY 14172

**THE RISE AND FALL OF A "STAR":**

A newspaper serves many purposes in a local community, but fortunate indeed is the city or village with a paper geared to the activities and needs of that local community. One such paper was the Wilson "Star", and, because of it, much of Wilson's early history was preserved.

It was started in 1878 by Tower and Betts who, that same year, sold it to Charles E. Honeywell, a native of Toronto. Mr. Honeywell was educated in that city and learned the printing trade at the Toronto Leader and Telegram.

When he acquired the "Star", he immediately began to publish it as a politically independent newspaper. It was printed on the 2nd floor of the Masonic Building, and all type was set by hand--a tedious and time consuming job. After each edition the type had to be sorted out and put back into their respective compartments, letter by letter.

Dora Hatch (Honeywell), at age 22, became an apprentice at the "Star", and lived with her parents on Lake Street--the present home of Milburn and Marion Campbell. Her work became easier when a linotype machine was purchased which permitted her to set type from a keyboard similar to a typewriter. She became an experienced operator, and it was during her 45 years with the paper that much of Wilson's history was recorded.

Charles Honeywell died in 1932 and his wife, Dora, took over publication of the "Star". In 1936 she was fatally injured in an auto accident, and the business was willed to her nephew, Milburn "Chuck" Campbell. He published the paper for 7 more years during which time Harold Albright became his business associate.

One time the decision was made to purchase a new press, and upon delivery it was found to be too wide for the door. It was left on the 2nd floor of the Masonic Building blocking both the stairway and entrance to the printing shop. Fortunately for "Chuck", the contract specified the width of the door so he was able to persuade the company to tear down the wall, move the press in, and repair the damage.

Another time a correspondent reported that Roy Church had died, so his obituary was written up immediately. Luckily, before going to press, "Chuck" happened to look out the window and saw Roy pedaling his bike down Young Street.

During the Great Depression, many State Banks closed their doors, and Milburn recalled that the Wilson "Star", (after bank liquidation) received a check for 2 cents from the Ransomville Bank. A 3 cent stamp was used to mail it. He also remembered that in 1939, Mrs. Julian Lutz was reported to be the 1st woman from Wilson to serve on jury at the Niagara County Courthouse.

In 1943, Milburn was called to serve in the armed forces so he sold out his interest in the paper to John Bieda, owner of the Wilson Pharmacy. Up until then the "Star" had been published for 65 years without interruption. It also had been awarded the distinction of becoming a member of the "One Half Century Club" of the American Press Association.

John Bieda operated the paper until November, 1943, then sold it to Fred McLennon, acting manager of the Buffalo Courier Express. Mr. McLennon died a few months later and publication was suspended. Mr. Bieda felt that loss of the paper would be a blow to the community, so he sold the drugstore and purchased back the newspaper equipment. Publication was resumed until April, 1945, when he too was called to serve his country. He retained ownership of the paper, however, and Robert Wark was his Managing Editor.

On May 4, 1950, the paper listed John V. Holmes as Editor and Publisher, and the issue on that date was the first published by means of the new off-set printing process. In 1951, Ed Henry bought the paper from Holmes, and he was later joined by Jack Nicholson and Charles Pomeroy, who published the paper under the name, "Frontier Star". Mr. Henry later sold out his interest to Samuel Noyes.

The last issue of the Wilson-oriented "Frontier Star" was published April 3, 1958, ending approximately 80 years of nearly continuous operation. Today, Mr. Pomeroy continues to operate the printing plant under the name, "Star Printing" of Newfane, NY.

All issues of the former "Star" are now available on micro-film at the Wilson Free Public Library, and all of the bound editions have been turned over to the Wilson Museum.

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**FALL APPLE FEST-1978:**

St. John's Episcopal Church will hold their annual Fall Apple Fest at the church on Sunday, October 25th, from 11:30 to 5:00 PM. A ham dinner with apple desserts will be served, also chowder and a variety of baked goods.

Gifts, candy, apple products, and craft displays in stained glass and tinware will also be available.

\* \* \* \* \*

**CULMINATION OF A DREAM:**

The late Dr. John F. Argue, 1st Pres. of the Wilson Historical Society, had a dream. His dream envisioned the erection of a large transportation building on the museum grounds which could adequately house about 2 dozen antique automobiles.

The building, which he helped plan, will be dedicated on October 11th with eleven of the cars and trucks that he donated displayed in it. A brass plaque on the outside of the structure will identify it as the "Dr. John F. Argue Memorial Building", and another plaque on an inside wall will bear the names of all those who had a part in building it.

The idea for a new building was discussed as early as 1984 after the society managed to accumulate \$10,000 in its building fund. When the town agreed to match that amount once construction was started, plans for the building were formulated.

It soon became apparent that additional funds would be required to erect the size building proposed, and in April, 1986, the directors voted to apply for a one-time grant through the offices of Rep. Joseph Pillittere of the 138th Assembly District.

The application, which was prepared by Millie Croop, treas., was later approved by the N.Y.S. Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, and at the March, 1987, meeting of the society, Mr. Pillittere presented a check for \$15,000 to Whitney Barnum, President.

The \$35,000 allotted to the building program covered the cost of all construction materials, but the building could not have been erected without the enthusiastic support of more than 60 volunteer members and friends who contributed their time, labor, equipment, and other services to complete the project.

Although the culmination of one man's dream will be observed at the dedication ceremony to be held Sunday, October 11th, at 2:00 PM, we must also recognize the leadership, supervision, and support received from: Whitney Barnum, Pres., Leo Klees, Ed Hastings, Art Schnoor, "Ollie" Clark, John Myers, Burt Jennings, George Linnabery, "Chuck" Messersmith, Donald Burrows, and Harold Mosher, town of Wilson Supervisor.

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**NEW MEMBERSHIP ROLL (1987-88):**

A new membership roll will be in the mail soon. It is divided into 3 categories, Niagara County residents; Members living outside Niagara County; and Junior Members under 18 yrs.

The roll is divided to make it easier for Memorial Day Chairpersons to contact local members for help. Please save your copies as it is not planned to publish another roll this year.

We found that two families were inadvertently left off the roll. Please add the names of Roger and Marge Goodman (751-9458) and Howard and Leona Hunter and daughters Kalene and Kimberly (751-6686).

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**IN MEMORIAM:**

The society extends its heartfelt sympathy to the family of Merritt Cake, 68, who died at Intercommunity Hospital, Newfane, on Sept. 8, 1987, after a short illness. He is survived by his wife, Frances, of Wilson; and a son, Kelton (Patricia) Cake of Gasport.

Merritt was a career soldier and retired from the U.S. Army in 1983 with the rank of Master Sergeant after 30 yrs. He was a member of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. Interment was in Greenwood, Wilson, with Rev. David Palmer officiating.

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**RECENT ACQUISITIONS:**

Gerald Rodney, Belvidere, Illinois, & Charles Messersmith have donated an English Creamer and Sugar Bowl passed down in the Rodney family from the early 1700's; Also documents including Deed from Wood to McCauley (1861); Deed from McCauley to Rodney (1862); and Orders for election of Isaac Witbeck to Sgt., 6th Regiment, 37th Brigade, 8th Div. Infantry, NYS Militia (1835).

Nettie Stimson: Adding Machine used by Clarence Blake in 1924 at Grambos Ice Cream Company in Ransomville; also Hanger from Valschow & Smith Clothiers, Wilson, and listed misc. books.

Dr. Argue Estate: Complete Encyclopedia of Motorcars-1885 to present.

Eleanor Harrington: Fairbanks Scale and 1931 Postal Scale from former Wilson Postoffice.

Mat Karsten: Class '87 T-Shirt with names of Wilson graduates printed on back.

Bill Bartz: Railroad Tie Shaper and Wooden Rake.

Donald Wiltse: 12 Volumes Popular Mechanics, "Do it Yourself Encyclopedia" (1955)

Bessie Cole: "The Homes of our Favorite Poets".

Eloise Culverwell: Four Pieced Silk Skirts (1901-05)

Frank H. Fenn, Ransomville: Bob Sleds and Hay Knife.

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Someone left a 1933 Quilt at the entranceway to the museum a few weeks ago, and the acquisitions comm. would like to know who the donor is. If you can solve the puzzle, please call Lois Jennings, 751-9783.

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**HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JENNIE:**

Jennie Bigalow is starting her second 100 years on September 28th, and all members of the Wilson Society join in wishing their 101 yr. old Honorary Member a very happy birthday. Jennie was born in Wilson in 1886 before the "horseless carriage" was invented and, at the time, Grover Cleveland was President of the United States.

In 1906 she married Fred Bigalow who later became Niagara County Sheriff, and during that time she served as a matron at the jail in Lockport. She is also a life member of the Order of the Eastern Star, and Womens' Society for Christian Service at Exley Methodist Church.

You may send a greeting to Jennie addressed to the Fairchild Manor Nursing Home, 765 Fairchild Place, Lewiston, NY 14092.

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**NEW MEMBERS:**

We welcome the following new members who joined during the past month: Margaret Houghtling of Moore Haven, Florida; and Leo and Donna (Houghtling) Lewandowski of Lockport, NY.

\* \* \* \* \*

MODEL DEPICTS EARLY FORT:

In the early days of our nation's history, most of the waterways leading into "New France" were controlled by a number of strategically placed forts, and one of the best known was old Fort Niagara. Not as well known was the 1759 fort built by the British along the Niagara at Lewiston on the ruins of a former French fort.

After extensive research, Harry Haven, an amateur archeologist, built a 3x5 foot diorama of the former 1759 fort complete with 4 corner blockhouses, cannon ports, and rifle loop holes for warding off Indian attacks.

Two small freight wagons climb the incline from the landing warf at river's edge to demonstrate how goods were brought to Lewiston and started up the portage over Lewiston Hill.

Inside the log stockade is a warehouse for storing pelts, and a barracks with two staircases lead to the 2nd floor sleeping quarters for 125 soldiers. A small cannon may be seen guarding the front of the barracks.

A scale of 1 inch to 12 feet was used to construct the model which is made of a green plaster base on wire mesh over wooden pegs set to contour lines.

The small model depicts a time on the Niagara Frontier when many historic events were taking place. Among these was the Devil's Hole Massacre when the fort's garrison was sent out to try and help the doomed wagon train.

It was also from this site that American troops crossed the Niagara River during the War of 1812 in the unsuccessful attempt to capture Queenston Heights.

Lemuel Cook, the 1st settler on the Niagara Frontier, also lived at the fort with his family until he was able to buy land and build on the historic "Mile Strip".

Mr. Haven has given the diorama to the museum, and it is planned to exhibit it soon.

\* \* \* \* \*

SOCIETY HAPPENINGS:

Ed Hastings has laid up the cement block wall for the new storage room, and it is planned to put a roof and door on before winter sets in.

Jim Pisello and his antique car committee have arranged the old cars neatly in the new transportation building, and have also come up with a great idea to call attention to it. During visiting hours on Sundays, they've been placing one of the antique cars at the entrance-way to the museum--a real eye catcher.

Burt Jennings has given the steel lawn swing 2 coats of paint, and he and Don Burrows plan to put new siding on the south side of the old 1903 railroad caboose.

The inside walls of the so-called "food building", (which formerly housed the society's old cars) has been given a new coat of white paint by Don Burrows, Dan King, and Lynn Barnum.

Winnie Fischer, Chrm. Ways & Means, reports that \$145.65 was taken in at the society's table at Little League Park during the Labor Day flea market. She is now making plans for the annual Bake Sale which will be held at the town hall on Election Day, November 3rd.

Jan Sporleder, Chrm., Historical Sites Comm., has arranged for the town to replace the Collegiate Institute marker that was removed when the town hall was remodeled. The sign marks the site of the old Institute which later merged with Union Free School Dist. No. 1. The old brick high school burned down after the new Central School was built, and the present town hall was built on the site. There are about 15 markers in town, and Jan has done a fine job keeping them in repair and painted.

"Chuck" Messersmith has overhauled the windmill, and put three coats of sealer on the cement reservoir to make it watertight. The windmill is operable and shows how water was pumped in early days for livestock and other purposes. It is an attractive and historic exhibit, and represents man's earliest attempt to harness energy. "Chuck" plans to give the entire windmill a coat of paint this fall.

Art Schnoor and "Chuck" Messersmith have mounted the "workers' plaque" at the inside entrance to the new Dr. John F. Argue Memorial Building. This plaque bears the names of all persons who volunteered their time and equipment to build the new building.

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OCTOBER PROGRAM:

Jon Williams will be quest speaker at the Oct. 19th meeting of the society, and the topic for his discussion will be, "The 30' & 40's--the Golden Age of Radio."

Chris Kelman and Lois Jennings will be hostesses for the evening, and will serve light refreshments following the program.

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OCTOBER GREETERS:

Sunday afternoons, 2-4PM: Oct. 4th, Ron and Judy Zauner; Oct. 11th, Ralph and Helen Dinse; Oct. 18th, Fred and Sara Berry; and Oct. 25th, George and Dorothy Linnabery.

\* \* \* \* \*

NEW MEMBERS:

We welcome into the sociey, Margaret Houghtling of Moore Haven, Florida; and Leo and Donna (Houghtling) Lewandowski of Lockport, NY.

\* \* \* \* \*

CACHET SALE SUCCESSFUL:

The society realized over \$700 from the sale of cachets at the Wilson Postoffice on Sept. 17th, 200th anniversary of our Nation's Constitution. Norm MacAskill, 1st Vice-Pres., with fine co-operation from Don Ramsdell, Postmaster, supervised the program, and the one-of-a-kind cachet was cleverly designed by Miss Diane Moore of Ransomville. Other members who helped with the all day sale were: Martha MacAskill, Eleanor Myers, Winnie Fischer, Betty Stimson, Bill Fritton, and Lois Jennings.

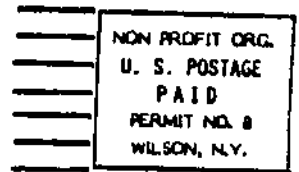
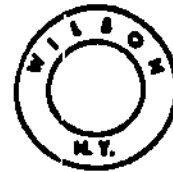
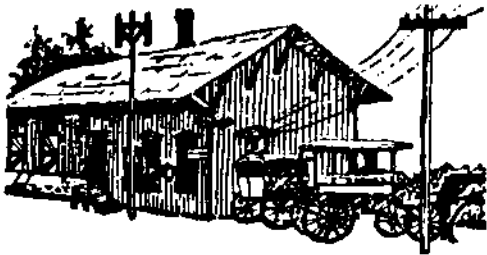
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THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS will meet at the museum on Wednesday, October 14th, at 7:30 PM.

\* \* \* \* \*

BON MOT: A lot of good could be accomplished in this world if nobody cared who got the credit.

\* \* \* \* \*



**Wilson Historical Society**

WILSON, NEW YORK 14172

**NEWSLETTER**

DONALD W. CROOP, Editor

November 1987 Vol.16 No.10  
(Coleman Press)

LIBRARIAN  
WILSON CENTRAL SCHOOL  
WILSON, NY 14172

**TUGWELL NAME REMEMBERED IN WILSON:**

To many persons who settled in Wilson during the past 25 or 30 years, the name Tugwell might mean very little, but for those who lived in town prior to the 1940's, the name might stir up a few memories.

The house at 425 Lake Street, the former Tugwell home, is now the residence of the Roger Mawhiney family, and the barn that stands behind it still bears the name, "Tugwell Place". It also is a historic reminder of an earlier day when one of Wilson's former personalities, Charles Tugwell, was establishing himself in the canning and cold storage business.

Prior to 1890, the family lived in Sinclairville, Chautauqua County, where, according to Doris Hunter Fraser of Jamestown, a couple little known incidents in the life of Charlie Tugwell might bear repeating.

In 1890, for instance, he served as a trustee on Sinclairville's 1st volunteer fire department which, at the time, consisted mainly of a "hook and ladder affair with horse-drawn vehicle." In 1896, he installed the 1st bath tub in the village of Sinclairville, and drew water for it through a wooden main connected to springs about two miles west of the village. One section of that wood main is now in the Valley Historical Museum.

It was around 1900 when Tugwell and his family moved to Wilson and, on the site of the present Pfeiffer Food Plant, he established the Fredonia Preserving Company.

It is possible that his interest in building a water line at Sinclairville carried over to Wilson since it was through his efforts that a new water line was laid along Lake Street to his canning company. It provided water to homes along the route as well, and Tugwell was also active in bringing electricity into the village.

He was greatly interested in community affairs and served as President of the village board for 5 years. He also organized the old Wilson State Bank in the building now used by the Wilson Branch of Marine Midland. In other pursuits he served as President of the Wilson Free Library Association, and was a member of the Masonic Lodge and Shriners.

In addition to their modest home on Lake Street, the Tugwells had a cottage on what was formerly known as Wintergreen Island. Although now the site of Clark's Marina, to many old timers the cottage was a landmark holding many beautiful memories.

The Tugwell name became widely known throughout the United States when their son, "Rex" Tugwell became Assistant Secretary of Agriculture under the Administration of Pres. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He had become a good friend of the President when Roosevelt served as Governor of New York, and received his appointment to the President's Cabinet while a Professor of Economics at Columbia University.

Although Rex was born in Sinclairville in 1891, he received part of his education at the old Wilson Academy, and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1915 with a B.S. in Economics. Subsequently, he earned his Master's Degree and Ph.D at the same college.

As a boy, Rex was an avid reader, and those who knew him considered him friendly and kind-hearted. He loved sports and the out-of-doors, and spent many boyhood hours swimming, boating, and fishing at the summer cottage on Tuscarora Bay. He was said to be extremely shy, and tried to keep out of the spotlight--always working hard behind the scenes.

Although frequently labeled as a "radical" because of his concern for the underprivileged, the active and intelligent economic advisor to the President not only brought national recognition to himself, but also to the village of Wilson where he spent most of his boyhood years.

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**CULTURAL AWARENESS PROMOTED:**

The Newsletter of the WNY Association of Historical Agencies reports that Gov. Mario Cuomo has proclaimed 1988 as "Community Heritage Year" in New York State, and that a series of events in towns and counties across the state will be designed to promote public awareness of the history and culture in those communities.

It is believed that the action by the governor may tend to bring about a better understanding in some individuals of the work being done by their local historical societies.

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**NOVEMBER GREETERS:**

Emma Schrader, Chrm., has announced that the following members have offered to serve as museum greeters, Sunday afternoons from 2:00 to 4:00 PM.

Nov. 1st, Kenton and Bessie Cole; Nov. 8th, Bill and Peg Fritton; Nov. 15th, Harold and Barbara Mosher; Nov. 22nd, Shirley Urtel; and Nov. 29th, Margaret Moyer and Helen French.

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TRANSPORTATION BUILDING DEDICATED:

The Dr. John F. Argue Memorial Building was dedicated Sunday, October 11th, at 2:00 PM with over 100 persons attending the ceremony.

The program started promptly with Clark Stimson, M.C., calling on the Rev. David Palmer of Exley United Methodist Church for the invocation.

Guest of Honor, Assemblyman Joseph T. Pillittere, who helped the society get part of the funding for the building, spoke briefly. Remarks were also given by Don Croop, Newsletter Editor, and Eleanor Myers, town of Wilson Historian.

Mrs. Susan Schearer spoke for the Argue family and expressed the hope that the congenial and harmonious manner in which her father, as President, had conducted the society, would continue in the years ahead.

The ceremony was concluded with the benediction given by Father Paul Burkard of Our Lady of the Rosary R.C. Church, and visitors were then able to tour the facilities and look over the antique and classic cars.

The committee in charge of arrangements were Nettie Stimson and Jim Pisello, co-chairpersons, Lois Barnum, Chris Goodman, Lois Jennings, Leo Klees, Sidney Pettit, Faye Pisello, Arthur Schnoor, and Janet Sporleder. Refreshments were catered by Mrs. Dorothy Parker.

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FACE LIFT:

The 1903 caboose is looking great, and at the rate Burt Jennings and his helpers are going, it looks 100% better than it did when first acquired from J. Robert Stephanski of Lockport. Freshly painted and sporting newly trimmed windows, the old work caboose really shines. Our compliments to Ollie Clark, Donna Clark, John Myers, Don Burrows, Sidney Pettit, Gary Pettit, Don Smithson, and "Chuck" Messersmith who've helped Burt keep the caboose on the right track.

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FROM THE MAILBAG:

Beatrice Mensch writes that she plans to sell her home in Mesa, Arizona. She has had some medical problems, and hopes to be living with her son in Lockport soon. She said that she would be looking forward to attending next year's Memorial Day Fair.

David and "Gus" Bradley have notified us that the wrong phone number was put after their name on the 1987-88 Membership Roll. Please change to 751-9042.

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ARTS FESTIVAL SCHEDULED:

On November 7th and 8th, the "19th Century Women's Arts Festival", sponsored by the Lock City P&BW Club, will be held at the Keenan Center, and will provide a look at womens' lives during the Victorian Era of the late 1850's to 1900. Featured will be historical displays, entertainment, lectures, and arts and crafts. Admission will be \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for Senior Citizens and children under twelve. Refreshments will be available.

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NOVEMBER PROGRAM MEETING:

Guest speaker at the November 16th meeting of the society will be Mr. John Henel of Snyder, New York, and the subject of his talk will be, "An Introduction to the 3rd Largest Hobby in the World, Collecting Postcards." Mr. Henel, a leader in his trade, will bring some of his cards to illustrate his presentation.

Hostesses for the evening will be Edna Robinson and Kathleen Pearce, who will serve light refreshments following the program.

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LET'S THINK CHRISTMAS:

In a few more weeks, the Holidays will be upon us. Which reminds us that the Wilson Museum is well stocked with many historical booklets, note paper, and other items that would make fine, economical gifts for that "hard to please" relative or friend.

The society's cookbook, at \$4.50 per copy, has always been a winner. Since good recipes never go out of style, it is now in its third printing.

A new release, "Wilson's Roads" sells for \$1.25 each; and by popular demand, 250 more copies of "Tall Tales and Legends" have been printed up at \$2.00 per copy.

The price of the "Diary of a Deadman", which we purchase from the Parks Service at Gettysburg, has gone up, so we have to get \$6.50 per book. Compiled by Jean Ray, the "Diary" contains the letters of Ira S. Pettit who served in the Civil War and spent the last days of his life in the squalors of Andersonville Prison.

Ira was born and raised on the "Slash" Maple Road, town of Wilson, and some of the families mentioned in the book besides the Pettits include the Pease, Holmes, Salisbury, Wright, Woodbury, Moody, and Pangburn families.

Anyone desiring booklets by mail should include 50 cents per book to help defray cost of postage and mailing. (Diaries require \$2.00 for postage and mailing)

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PROJECTS PENDING:

Lumber has been purchased for the new roof over the storage area, and plans for another entranceway into the depot basement are being worked out.

Expansion of the Mildred Middleton Library has also been proposed, which would make relocation of the rest rooms necessary.

John Myers has acquired a large assortment of audio equipment at unbelievably low prices, and plans to expand our present sound system so that it will be more tolerable to everyone. Since this will be a sizeable task, he hopes several volunteers will be willing to help him.

It has been decided to place the recently acquired light tower at the north east corner of the parking lot. The old tower has been a Wilson landmark for many years guiding commercial ships and fishermen to the piers and safety of the inner harbor.

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COUNTING TIME is not so important as making time count.

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FORTS ON THE NIAGARA FRONTIER:

When the society acquired Harry Haven's diorama model of the 1759 British fort built on the old Lewiston Portage, (where Art Park stands today) we thought it would be interesting to try and find out how many other military bastions were erected along the Niagara River.

Research reveals that France, in an effort to dominate the Great Lakes region, built 12 forts along the east bank of the Niagara during a 100 year period. All were either burned, destroyed, abandoned, or allowed to fall into British hands.

When Britain took control of the frontier, they built additional fortifications at Forts George, Mississauga, and Erie, and also built several blockhouses on the east bank.

The 36 mile stretch of water, probably the most fortified river in the world, was coveted by both France and England, because they knew that the country that controlled the mighty Niagara, also held the "Key to the West".

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THEY'RE SO CUTE:

A "Country Bunny" and a "Victorian Doll named "Elizabeth", will be awarded to some lucky person at the regular meeting in December. Tickets are now available from Carole Schnoor at 50 cents each or three for a dollar. You need not be present to win.

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The society, as an organization, has voted to donate \$100 to the CCCC, the Caring Christian Community Center, to help with their holiday program.

At the regular meeting on December 21st, a box will be set-up by the Christmas tree, and everyone is urged to bring canned goods or non perishable foods to put in it. If you cannot attend the meeting, but would like to contribute, you may do so by leaving your donations at the museum any Sunday afternoon from 2 to 4 PM. Christmas is a time for sharing.

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NEW MEMBERS:

Several new members have joined the society. Please welcome Hoyt and Eleanor Desso; William and Marjory Ganshaw; and Mary Ellen Ganshaw, all from Wilson; also, William Myers of Fremont, California.

Our latest tally shows that the Wilson Historical Society now has a total of 712 members with 499 residing in the local area or within Niagara County, and 213 living outside the county or in other states.

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RECENT ACQUISITIONS:

Mrs. Roberta Taylor, Wilson Central School, has given the museum a copy of the Yearbook for the Class of '87; also, from the school, a May 27, 1898 copy of the 5 o'clock edition of the old "Buffalo Enquirer".

Emma Lou Reppentine: Copy of Niagara Falls Gazette, May 28, 1921; also, 9 antique Christmas tree ornaments.

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THE DAYS OF RADIO:

Jon Williams, an instructor at N.C.C.C., gave an interesting presentation at the October meeting on the "Golden Age of Radio". It was pointed out that the 1st radio broadcast was in 1920 when the results of the presidential election between Harding and Cox was put over the air from station KDKA, Pittsburg. At the time, only crystal sets with headphones were used permitting only one person at a time to listen.

It was during those early days of radio that everyone tuned in to the comedy routines of Billy Jones and Ernie Hare, better known as the "Happiness Boys".

Jon also played a tape featuring excerpts from some of the old, popular radio shows like "The Shadow", "The Lone Ranger", "Fibber McGee and Molly", "Jack Benny", and George Burns and Gracie Allen."

He concluded the program with some recordings from the "Big Band Era", as the audience tried to name the band leader and the selection played.

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NO "FISH STORY":

Fishing has been so good in the Wilson area, it was written up recently in "Out Door Life" magazine.

At the present time, according to "Pinky" Robinson, hundreds of brown and rainbow trout are being taken from local waters and, when they'e running, the salmon fishing is great about two miles off the Wilson piers.

He added that 115 thousand Chinook salmon fingerlings were released at the Tuscarora Landing Ramp, for the first time ever, and 12,500 steelheads were put into the West Branch of 12 Mile Creek near Roosevelt Beach.

There has been a sharp increase in the number of out-of-state fishing licenses issued, giving credence to the expanding interest in local fishing derbies by anglers from all over the country.

Bed and breakfast units, motels, and other facilities are being developed to accomodate the influx of visitors, and it may be rightly assumed that you can't attract thousands of persons into a community without its having a dramatic impact on the local economy.

After all, isn't that what tourism is all about?

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at the museum, Wednesday evening, November 11th, at 7:30 PM.

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DID YOU KNOW:

That "America's Sweetheart", Mary Pickford, a Hollywood movie star of the 1920's, at one time lived in Lewiston, N.Y.

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