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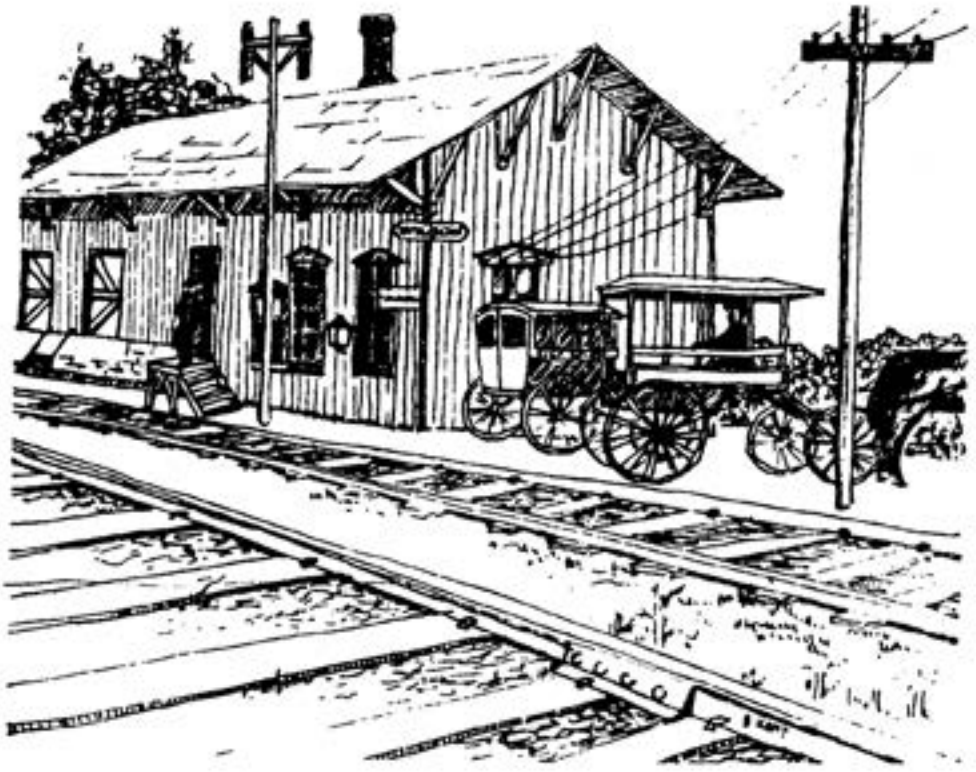
WILSON SKETCHBOOK II
(A History of Wilson)

by

DONALD W. CROOP



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DEDICATION

WILSON SKETCHBOOK II IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF DR. JOHN F. ARGUE (1911-1986), FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE WILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AND WHITNEY E. BARNUM (1914-1988) TOWN OF WILSON SUPERVISOR, KEY FIGURES IN THE ORGANIZATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND WILSON MUSEUM IN THE TOWN OF WILSON.

DONALD WRIGHT CROOP

DR. ARGUE SIGNING OVER THE RAILROAD PROPERTY TO THE TOWN OF WILSON, OCTOBER 16, 1972. (L. TO R.) RICHARD SOUTHARD, TOWN OF WILSON LAWYER; WHITNEY BARNUM, TOWN SUPERVISOR; DR. JOHN F. ARGUE, PRESIDENT AND HENRY DELANGE, LAWYER FOR DR. ARGUE.

FOREWARD

SKETCHBOOK II IS A CONTINUATION OF HISTORICAL ARTICLES WRITTEN BY DON CROOP FOR THE WILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY "NEWSLETTER" FROM 1989 TO 1998.

ITEMS WERE COMPILED FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES INCLUDING EARLY NEWSPAPERS; INTERVIEWS WITH ELDERLY WILSON RESIDENTS; OLD LETTERS; AND REFERENCES TO NIAGARA COUNTY HISTORIES.

WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO BETH CROOP WALDRON OF WILSON WHO EDITED AND TYPED THE MATERIAL; AND TO SARA BERRY, WHO HELPED WITH THE LAYOUT.

CHARLES HORTON OF WILSON SUPPLIED MOST OF THE PICTURES FROM HIS EXTENSIVE COLLECTION, AND THE VALUABLE ASSISTANCE HE PROVIDED IN SELECTING, ARRANGING AND MAKING COPIES FOR THE BOOK IS MOST APPRECIATED.

THE CROSS INDEX FILE WAS PREPARED BY "BECKY" BAKER HILL OF FREMONT, OHIO, LIBRARIAN AT THE PRESIDENT RUTHERFORD B. HAYES LIBRARY. "BECKY", A NATIVE OF WILSON GRADUATED FROM WILSON CENTRAL SCHOOL IN 1966.

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THE PIONEER EXPERIENCE

It probably is hard for anyone living today to imagine what it must have been like, to come to Wilson 185 years ago to try and carve a home out of an unfriendly wilderness.

Henry Lockwood, perhaps the first white man to book land from the Holland Land Company within the present confines of the Town of Wilson, located his cabin on lot No. 77 in the northeast section of the town along the creek that was named for him. His cabin had split slabs for a floor and bark from the trees for a roof.

All of the first crude cabins were made from logs, and most were built along the lake--usually by Americans who had previously emigrated to Canada. Many settlers built summer shelters with the spacious out-of-doors serving as their kitchens. It generally took about three or four months to erect the cabin and replace the shelter, during which time cooking was done over an open fire in kettles suspended on a pole between two forked sticks.

The first few years, the settlers were able to obtain provisions from Canada, and by the time they could raise their own grain, they still had to take it to Port Hope or Hamilton in Canada for grinding. One can easily imagine why the settlers rejoiced when Reuben Wilson built the first grist mill in town.

Most of the cabins along the lake were destroyed by the British in the December 24th raid during the War of 1812, and as a result the pioneers suffered great hardship with many moving from the area. When the war ended, they returned again and took up the task of rebuilding their homes and improving their lands.

Doctors were in short supply, and many of the pioneers who were subjected to severe weather conditions or illness found life very difficult. Many injuries or sickness had to be cared for by family and friends, and the misguided felling of a tree or slip of an axe might easily result in injury or death.

Living in the wilderness did have some advantages as the streams were unpolluted and provided an abundance of bass, pike, and sturgeon. Nut trees such as hickory and black walnut also flourished throughout the area, and a variety of wild berries, cherries, and grapes were available for the taking.

The pioneers of the early 1800's would no doubt, be amazed to see the changes that have taken place since they first came here with their families in oxen-drawn wagons. The muddy trails have been replaced by asphalt highways, and the swamps and virgin forests have been cleared to provide thousands of acres of fertile farmlands.

The log cabins that once served as homes, churches, and schools, have all disappeared except for one or two remaining examples. One cabin, in the Town of Wilson, is located on Chestnut Road just east of North Road. It is still in use, although the original logs have been covered with siding. It was erected before the Barge Canal was completed through Niagara County, and a marker has been placed beside it by the Wilson Historical Society.

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BUILDING A HOME IN THE WILDERNESS

An interesting newspaper article written in 1909 by one of Ransomville's early pioneers, Hannah Baker, deals with some of the hardships many of them had to cope with in the 1820's. Ransomville lies partly within Wilson at the southwest corner of the town. Some excerpts from her account follow:

"About 1822, my father was living in Canandaigua and decided to join some friends in the 'far west', and took out an article for land from the Holland Land Company.

' Preparations were made for a journey of 100 miles in wagons, and everything in the way of household necessities such as dried fruit and vegetable and flower seeds were included.

' The trip along the Ridge to Averill's Corners, where we struck the North Woods, was delightful, but the land from that point on was swampy, so we had to abandon our wagons and repack our goods on queer-looking sleds.

' A place was hollowed out for the children, and my mother followed along behind weeping at the prospect of having a home in such dismal surroundings. Great care had to be used to prevent the sleds being overturned in the mud and water as we made our way over stumps and roots of trees.

' Near the site of the present Village of Ransomville, we received a hearty welcome at the home of my father's sister, Mrs. Newton Phelps. A few trees were felled and a house was built on the site. (1971 location of the Ransomville Fire Station)

' It was a regulation log house. The chinks were filled with mud, and the shingles were home-made and fastened to the rafters by pegs and poles in the absence of nails.

' When the chimney reached the chamber floor, (second story loft) a big pole was placed across to support a chain from which a kettle was hung. The pole started out as a green log, but sometimes the roaring fire burned it in two and away went our dinner.

' The chimney was made of sticks laid cob-fashion, and plastered with mud, of which there was plenty. At the doorway a blanket was hung until a door with wooden hinges could be made. This was the only protection between wolves and babies, yet I never heard of a house being entered by a wild beast.

' A greased paper served for a glass until one could be procured. The house had no partitions and in one corner was the bed under which was placed the children's trundle bed. A home-made table and chairs completed the furnishings.

' In front of the house stood a large stump which my father fashioned into a baking oven. He leveled it, covered it with mud, and then laid a conical pile of wood upon the mud mortar, leaving a doorway in front. A round stick coated with mud was inserted in the back near a stump, and the pile was then coated with mud within and without and fired, making a clay oven. The stick that was inserted, being burned out, formed the draft.

' Since space was needed for the corn, wheat, flax and orchard, those grand trees were felled and burned. We cried "shame" and "waste". but what those pioneers needed was space, not wood.

BUILDING A HOME IN THE WILDERNESS

'The drinking water was obtained from shallow holes near the house which, when filled with water and leaves, became a breeding place for disease. Fever and ague seized the early settlers with a fiendish grasp and shook them till their teeth chattered and their bones ached. Then followed a burning fever, accompanied by wracking pains in the head and back and melancholy.

'The people got well, the clearings increased in size, grain glistened in the sun, and in the slashings luscious blackberries ripened. Prosperity turned her smiling face toward the little colony.

' In early days the settlers paid $1.25 to $2.50 an acre for land with one tenth down and the remainder in easy payments. It was not uncommon for men to walk to Batavia to make their payments, sometimes taking their last horse or team of oxen for that purpose.

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REX TUGWELL'S LOG CABIN RETREAT ON TUGWELL ISLAND

EARLY DAYS AT " SUNSET ISLAND"

In 1908, the Wilson mainland west of the Boathouse was separated from Lake Ontario by Twelve Mile Creek and the peninsula known as "Sunset Island". At that time, the peninsula extended from the mouth of the creek to the Foote Farm. (Roosevelt Beach area) Boaters or ice skaters could row or skate up the creek past Plumb's Bridge (Martins) and Quiett's Bridge (Moot's) to Bullhead Point and beyond.

According to the late Fay Campbell, the creek broke through the peninsula near Foote's farm in 1912, and left a small strip of land which was called "Crowie's Island". There were some trees on it, and Fay helped Crowie saw them down the following winter.

In the spring, two more narrow strips of land on the peninsula washed into the lake, and the creek west of "Sunset Island" became part of Lake Ontario. "Sunset Island", however, was still a peninsula because it was joined to the mainland by a sandbar which closed off the area where the creek once joined the Wilson Harbor or Bay.

It is believed that in the early 1800's the Island was a hunting ground for the Neuter and Tuscarora Indians, and this theory is based on the fact that hundreds of arrow heads were found there. Reference was also made to an old burial ground at the eastern end of the Island. The late Bess Crawford, who spent most of her life on the Island, wrote that there was no record of the people buried there, but the burial site's location was well established.

Residential development of the Island started when George Moule bought the central and east portions, and cleared many of the huge white oaks that were on it. In 1888, he engaged E.V.W. Dox of Wilson to survey the central section into 40' lots on both the lake and creek sides of the Island. He named it "Maple Grove Park", and built a cottage along the creek. His nephew, Miles Vosburg, and his new bride lived in it, thus becoming the first permanent residents.

In 1899, "Jake" Miller of Pittsburgh bought two lots from his friend, Moule, and from that day on, development of the Island became an obsession with him. He gradually took over Maple Grove Park by purchasing lot after lot which he then re-sold to others. In order to keep "his" Island the way he wanted it, however, he placed restrictions on purchasers, and old property deeds show that lot owners were prohibited from selling liquor , or raising pigs or chickens

Miller retired from his electrical business in Pittsburgh in 1905, and moved to Wilson permanently. He immediately set about improving the Island by installing acetylene gas, and building a power plant to provide residents with electricity. Later he erected a water tower and pumping station so water could be piped into each cottage.

Improvements also included an octagon shaped dance hall where week-end dances were held, and a "Park Theater" where movies were shown on Saturday nights. Other attractions were a bowling alley, pool room, baseball field, and tennis courts.

His biggest venture was a new hotel which he later sold to a Mr. Walters, who resold it to William Wright of Pittsburgh. Wright named it the Pittsburgh Hotel, and he operated it successfully until 1913 when it burned to the ground in a spectacular fire. It was never rebuilt.

When the Millers died, the Island's residents formed their own governing body which was named "The Sunset Beach Colony, Inc." A womens auxiliary was formed to arrange for dances and other entertainment. A local musical group from Wilson played for some of the early dances and the musicians were Clare Coe, Sax; Stanley Giles, Trumpet; "Putty" Johnson, Drums; Jennie Meril, Piano; and Harold Albright, Banjo. From 1930 through 1934, another musical group played at the Island under the direction of Marjorie (Crossman) Hurlburt. Members of that group were, Larry Pease, Sax; Harry Hamblin, Trumpet; Ron Hamblin, Piano; "Willie" Rockwood, Drums; Richard Loomis, Sax; and Pete Burmaster, Bass. The band called themselves the "Indigoers", and their theme song was a hit of the times, "Mood Indigo".

Today, although much of the Island's north shore has eroded into the lake, it still remains a protective buffer between Lake Ontario and the Wilson mainland.

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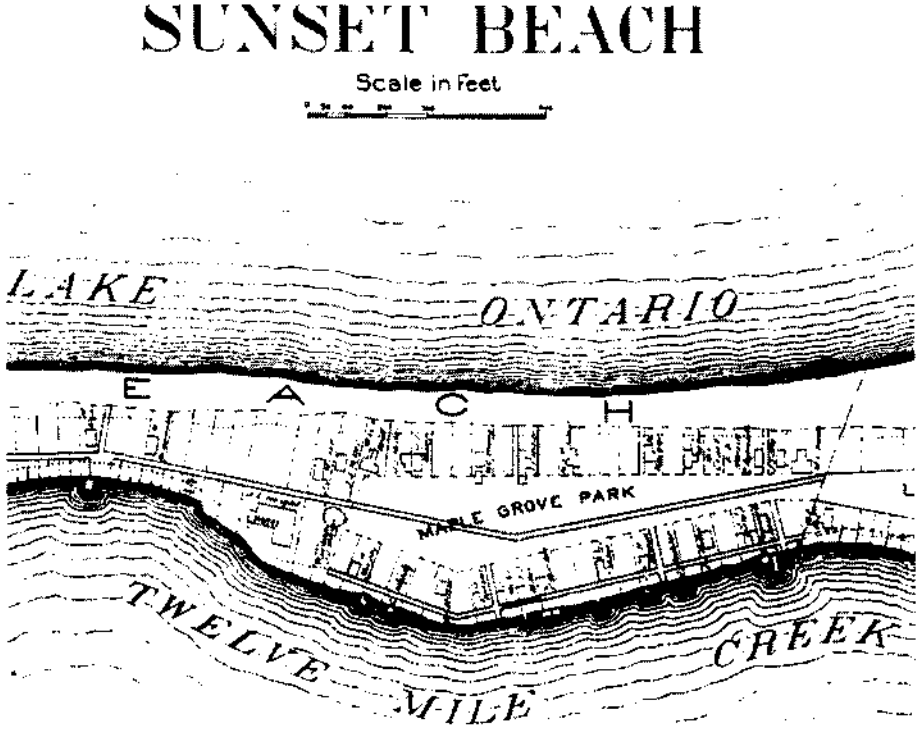

MAP OF MAPLE GROVE PARK IN THE 1990'S

PARK HISTORY REVIEWED

The History of Lake Island Park dates back to the late 1800's when W. N. Harris and Dr. T. C. Walton acquired about 100 acres of land along the West Branch of the 12 Mile Creek-- so named because the mouth of the Creek was 12 miles from Old Fort Niagara.

The grand opening of the park was celebrated in 1889 with a number of activities including a Baby Contest, Parade of Boats, Ball game, and Water Sports. The late Bessie Crawford, who lived most of her life on the Island, attended with her parents and received first prize for being he prettiest baby present. (Much of the material used in this article was related to your editor by Mrs. Crawford.)

A Parade of Boats was held in the early evening and the gaily decorated boats with Chinese lanterns, made a pretty sight as they slowly sailed along the Creek to the strains of soft music played on mandolins and guitars. Luther Wilson, and other officials rode on a barge from which water was poured in the Creek and rechristened by Luther as the Tuscarora River.

The name, Tuscarora was suggested because the headwaters of the Creek originate in the Tuscarora Indian Reservation. The name, however, did not appear to take hold as the "river" is still referred to today as the "Twelve Mile Creek."

The Park became very popular as a picnic area and large crowds attended the Farmers Picnics which were held there each year. A ball diamond highlighted the recreational area which also had a water slide, bath house, boat livery, and Merry-Go-Round run by a thresher-type steam engine.

Thousands of people visited the Park during Wilson's "Gay Nineties" period including many Canadians who sailed by boat from Toronto. Some of the Canadian Steamers that unloaded passengers at the Park Piers had a capacity of 600 persons including the "Eurydice", "Cambria" and the "Columbia."

Ball games were a big attraction and an item in the July 7, 1892 edition of the Wilson "Star" described a game played between Niagara Falls Dolphins and the Toronto Wilmots. Four hundred Canadians and 5,000 residents from nearby towns watched as the Niagara Falls Dolphins defeated the Toronto Wilmots by a score of five to three.

Mr. Harris, who managed the Park, built a boarding house on the south shore of the Bay, and for several years it was considered the "place to go" by summer vacationers. The house later became the summer home of the Tugwell family. It was said that Mr. Harris catered to a select clientele, and forbid liquor sales, profanity, Sabbath desecration, or other bad conduct. One of the first developments in the Park was a 40x70 foot pavilion which was first called the Garden Opera House. Later known as the Pavilion, it became popular for dining, dancing, band concerts, and the showing of silent motion pictures.

In the September 24, 1890 edition of the "Philadelphia Real Estate Board and Building Guide" Harrison Albright, a Philadelphia architect is credited as having designed the structure. It was open on three sides with a bandstand built on the south end, and a porch where popcorn, soft drinks, and candy were sold.

On the north end, steps extended across the entire width of the building and led to the Bay where a large boat landing and dock were built. Both dock and building were illuminated with kerosene reflector lamps making it a beautiful sight to vacationers visiting the Park. Several old photos were taken near the pavilion including one showing the old Park Band. There is also a color lithograph in the Wilson Museum showing the old Pavilion as painted from an artist's memory.

The former Tuscarora or "T" Club was built around the Pavilion when the Tuscarora Park Association was organized in 1922. Art Ness managed the Association for 28 years during which time roads, lots, and a nine hole golf course were laid out by the Harris Architectural Firm of Buffalo. The "T" Club was a popular place for area residents who liked to dine out. In 1979 the Association was dissolved and the Tuscarora Clubhouse was burned down in a controlled fire set by members of the Wilson and Olcott Volunteer Fire Companies.

Today, if you drive around the former Park grounds, you may notice the attractive home of Floyd and Mary Clark which now stands on the site of the former Pavilion and "T" Club.

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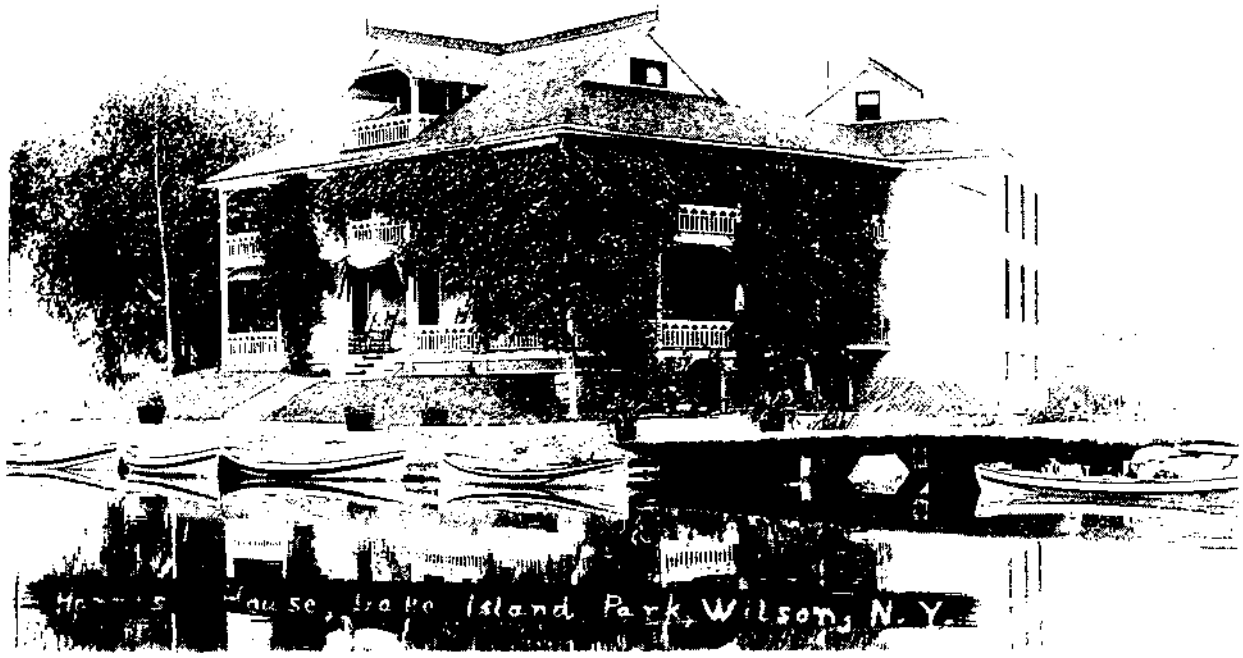

HARRIS BOARDING HOUSE - LATER THE SUMMER HOME OF THE TUGWELL FAMILY

STAGECOACH BROUGHT MAIL TO WILSON

History tells us that the first stagecoach line in Colonial America was started between Boston and New York in 1732, and it took about a week to cover the distance. Roads were always muddy in wet weather and full of ruts in dry weather, but as the roads improved so did their use for stagecoach travel increase. As the "Ridge" developed as a fairly good road into the Niagara Frontier, many taverns began to spring up along the route where travelers could stop for food, drink, or an overnight stay.

Some of the better known taverns included the Frontier House at Lewiston which hosted several important guests including Henry Clay, Jennie Lind, and Washington Irving. There was also the historic "Four Corners Tavern" run by Tom and Betsey Hustler. When James Fenimore Cooper visited Lewiston, he met the Hustlers and later used them as characters in his famous book, "The Spy". The cocktail drink was said to have originated at the Hustler Tavern when Betsey served rum and lemon juice drinks in a glass garnished with the tail feather from a cock pheasant.

About three miles east of Lewiston was a tavern run by Sparrow Sage, and when the Indians raided the Settlements during the War Of 1812, his tavern was spared because he had always supplied the Indians with plenty of 'fire water'.

Further east was Howell's Tavern where General Lafayette once stayed. It was said that his officers enjoyed drinking hard liquor at the bar, but that the General preferred lemonade drinks prepared for him by bar maid, Harriet Howell.

At Molyneaux Corners , the British pursuit of the burned-out settlers from Lewiston was halted when Captain McCarty and his Militia Company from Gaines, surprised the British soldiers at the Tavern and captured them.

Warrens Corners received its name from Ezra Warren who operated a tavern there, and Wright's Corners got its name from Solomon Wright who opened a tavern there in 1822.

Before the railroads replaced the stagecoach as a way of long distance travel, many so-called stagecoach routes connected local communities such as the one between Lockport and Wilson. One of the drivers of this mail coach line was Fred Faery, who formerly drove mules along the towpath of the Barge Canal. Fred married Emily Rowe of Reynolds Basin, and they moved to Wilson where he passed an exam and put in a successful bid to drive the mailcoach between Lockport and Wilson. He not only drove the coach, but did errands for individuals and store keepers, such as delivering large wheels of cheese, crackers and pickles at 10 cents an errand. Fred also had a regular passenger, a blind girl, who gave music lessons in Lockport. In the wintertime, he would wrap hot bricks in a blanket and place them around the girl to keep her warm on the trip to the city. The fare to Lockport was 50 cents.

The Faerys had a daughter, Emily, who attended school with Charles A. Wilson. They were later married and he became a successful commercial fisherman in Wilson.

STAGECOACH BROUGHT MAIL TO WILSON

Timothy Wilson, father of Charles, ran a bowling alley in the village on Young Street, by the present Marine Midland Bank. When the alleys were closed, the site was taken over by the Swann Bakery.

The late Mabel Wilson once donated a tin horn that was used by the drivers of the Wilson Stage. As the coach drove along the town line road and passed the home of someone who had mail in the coach, the driver would give a loud "blast" on the horn to alert the homeowner that he should come to Wilson and pick up his mail at the Post office

Some mail was delivered to Wilson by train after the "Hojack" operated through Wilson in 1876, and mail by stagecoach was discontinued and rural free delivery of mail was started in 1901 when out-lying post offices in East Wilson, Maple Street, South Wilson, and North Wilson were terminated.

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WILSON STAGE ON YOUNG STREET

OPENING THE "PURCHASE"

It is pretty common knowledge to most history students that in 1800, nearly all the area in Western New York was owned by the Holland Land Company. The only exceptions were, of course, the "Mile Strip" along the Niagara River, and the 200,000 acres set aside for the five Indian Reservations.

The name, Ellicott, pops up in many locations around Western New York, but probably there are not too may people aware that Joseph Ellicott was the chief surveyor for the Holland Land Company, and during the early 1800's was one of the most influential men in the area.

In the spring of 1798, he and a party of 130 men set out to survey the wilderness, and one of their first jobs was to arrange with the Indians where the exact boundaries for each reservation should be. The next important task was to mark the east boundary of the "Purchase", and when that was done the Company lands were surveyed into ranges and townships about 6 miles square.

It is said that Ellicott set high standards for the survey, and insisted that permanent stone markers be used. One of these markers may be seen at Olcott and we believe was dedicated as a historic landmark a few years ago by the Newfane Historical Society. Survey of the "Purchase" took longer than planned so with few exceptions, the first sale of lands to individuals did not take place until 1800.

Ellicott was named Resident Agent for the Holland Company, and the land was practically unoccupied when he took over. Travelers had to use Indian trails to come into the area, and the 1800 census for the town of Northampton, Ontario, lists only 152 residents.

While waiting for suitable quarters, Ellicott moved into the tavern home of Asa Ransom in Clarence Hollow where he conducted his business for two years before moving to Batavia.

Migration into the area was very slow at first--mainly because of lack of roads and the long distance one had to travel to record deeds and mortgages at the County Seat at Canandaigua, New York.

One of several old letters describes the old Buffalo Road as being "an obscure path through the woods with occasional blaze marks on trees to show the way." In fact, Ellicott himself wrote that "The main road from Buffalo to Batavia is so bad and so deep in mud and mire that it is almost impassable."

Ellicott still had road problems to contend with in 1804, but got permission to rebuild two roads in Western New York. One was the "Middle Road" which connected Big Tree (Geneseo) to a point just south of Buffalo Creek. The other extended from Batavia to New Amsterdam, (or Buffalo Creek) and was named the Buffalo Road. Neither road was actually completed until 1810.

In his annual report to the Willink Town meeting at Clarence in 1806, Ellicott stated that most applications for land were made in the months of May, June, September and October. The population began to expand as he encouraged the new towns to build roads and bridges, and when the War Of 1812 broke out, there were 26,000 people living in the 5,000 square miles comprising Western New York.

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THE OLD LEWISTON TRAIL

An old newspaper clipping notes that in 1812 a company of soldiers from Batavia followed the old Lewiston Trail to Cold Springs on the northern outskirts of Lockport where, being hot and thirsty, they drank freely from the spring's cool waters. Twelve of the soldiers died, and it was never fully determined whether they had been victims of a poisoned spring or a batch of bad whiskey. Regardless, they were buried on the knoll above the spring.

History tells us that there was a good deal of action on the Niagara Frontier during the War Of 1812, but the sparsely settled area escaped military action during the Revolution. However, in the latter years of 1779-80, General Sullivan raided the Indian villages in Central New York, and sent thousands of angry Iroquois fleeing along the Lewiston Trail to the British outpost at Fort Niagara. Soon, 5000 Indians were camped near the Fort, and the unexpected gathering of so many Indians and their families caused a severe drain on the Fort's supplies. In order to ease the situation, the Fort's Commander sent numerous war parties to raid settlers' cabins as far east as the Schoharie Valley. The raiding parties used the Lewiston Trail, and they spread throughout the area, burning and looting settlers' cabins as they went. Those who resisted were killed, but it was estimated that over 1,000 captives were forced to follow the trail back to old Fort Niagara. Some who survived were able to write about the atrocities they had been subjected to.

During the Revolution, about one of every three settlers were loyal to the English King, and they sometimes engaged in actions that sabotaged plans made by the American Patriots. As the war dragged on, resentment of the Tories turned to hate, and many of them were forced to flee west along the Lewiston Trail to escape the wrath of the Americans. At the Niagara River, the Loyalists were ferried across to Canada where they were given every opportunity to resume a normal life. The Tories were named United Empire Loyalists by the English and, because of their loyalty to the King, each family was given 200 acres of land. It has been said that up to the end of the Revolution, the old Lewiston Trail probably saw more action and more human misery than any other trail or road in New York State.

In 1800, the American Commander at Fort Niagara received permission from the Indians to widen the Lewiston Trail so that ox carts and sleds could be used to bring supplies to the Fort. Also, at this time, the Frontier became relatively quiet as new settlers began to take up lands surveyed by the Holland Land Company.

The calm was suddenly broken in 1812, however, when America again took up arms against the British, and in the Campaign of 1813, the Americans captured Fort George and the adjoining positions at Newark. Troops were later withdrawn with only 60 men left to guard the Fort, and when it was learned that a large British force was marching to retake it, the American Commander, Col. McClure, abandoned Fort George. Before retreating, however, he made the fatal mistake of torching the British village of Newark, which we know today as Niagara-On-The-Lake.

THE OLD LEWISTON TRAIL

On December 18th, a strong force of British and Indians crossed the river at 5 Mile Meadows, and marched on Fort Niagara where they captured the pickets. They found the gates to the Fort open, and the garrison of 450 soldiers were easily captured..

The British had been furious over the senseless burning of Newark, and with the Fort again under the British flag, retaliation was swift and cruel. Raiding parties proceeded to burn the few houses at Youngstown; plundered Lewiston; and sent hundreds of inhabitants fleeing east along the Lewiston Trail. Raiding parties were also sent into other unprotected areas including Wilson. All the settlers who had located along the lake shore from Fort Niagara to 18 Miles Creek, were exposed to great danger, but most families were able to flee. The raid was especially severe on the settlers as it was made in December, 1813, with winter closing in.

Today, modern highways follow the old Indian trail which is now lined with beautiful homes and farmlands. One may drive over the historic old trail by picking up Route 77 as it crosses the eastern border of Niagara County, then continuing west over Chestnut Ridge, the Old Niagara Road, and the Stone Road to Warrens Corners. There the trail winds its way west along Route 104 until it reaches the historic old settlement of Lewiston.

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WILSON'S "OLD DOBBIN" DAYS

In the late 1800's, Wilson, like many other communities, moved at a much slower pace that it does today. We need but refer to some notes left by the late Earl Armstrong to bear this out, and it's interesting to try and picture the village and town the way they used to be.

Blacksmith shops were common as the automobile had not yet made an impact, and "Old Dobbin" was still the main source of horsepower for both farming and transportation. There were eight blacksmith shops in town including Johnsons, Bonsteels, Biggins, Bells, Fittros, Stockwells, and Uptons, and with nearly 100 horses stabled in the village alone, they were all kept busy. It was always an interesting sight to watch the Smithy as he heated up and hammered out the iron shoes which he expertly fitted to the horse's hooves to protect them from rocky fields and roads. Residents did complain about the flies attracted by smelly stables, but when the automobile began to take over, the blacksmith shops slowly began to disappear.

There were also about 40 cows and over a thousand chickens kept within village limits, but residents complained when roosters crowed at night and kept them awake.

Slaughter houses were common in early Wilson, and Hackets sold most of their meat in their own village market. Wilkersons took most of their meat to Lockport, while Bigalows on Townline Road, shipped most of their meat to Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

There probably are few people around today that remember when stockyards were located west of the old railroad depot. That was where cattle and pigs were kept until they could be loaded on cars and shipped by rail to Buffalo.

Barrel-making was another thriving business, and at one time thousands of them were made for packing and shipping local fruit. The first cooper shop was run by the Johnson family in a large brick building at the corner of Wood and McChesney Streets. They began making barrels in June for delivery to fruit growers in July, and when they were unable to supply the demand, a Mr. Miller started another cooper shop near the railroad depot.

There was a great deal of fruit dried in Wilson, and at one time there were five drying houses in the village; one at Elberta, and one east of the village owned by Chester Clark. The Perigo family owned one on Seminary Street, and they mostly dried prunes. Grant Wright also had a dry house near the depot which burned down. He later rebuilt it and cold packed fruit, then later sold it to Zables who processed food and relishes there until the building again burned down and never was rebuilt.

The Chapman Flour and Grist Mill was located on Young Street near the west village line, and this steam powered mill ground feed and flour. They made two grades of bread and pastry flour, Angelus and White Rose, but during the busy season, people brought in corn. oats, wheat, and barley to be ground into stock feed.

The Coombs Sash and Frame Shop was just west of the mill, and also got its power from it. The Coombs boys cut the lumber into length and size, and when the mill was running, put together the sash and frames.

The George Brooks Machine Shop, just east of the mill, obtained its power from an underground steam pipe connected to the mill. Brooks was where the first Wilson Automobile was built, and he was believed to have invented the first ball and socket system which is still used on today's cars. (He apparently got nothing for his invention and died a poor man.) It was November 29, 1911 when the Chapman Mill and Brook's Machine Shop burned

The Conant and Bryant Power Company brought electricity into Wilson about 1911, and Jack Curry was the engineer in charge of the Power House. Floyd Wilson, although only 15 years of age, was the night engineer. The engine and electric power were shut off at 2:00 AM and started again at 5:00 AM. Even though the power was off for three hours each night, no one seemed to mind because every one had kerosene lamps to fall back on. At that time there were no refrigerators, and all cooling was done with ice cut from the Wilson Bay.

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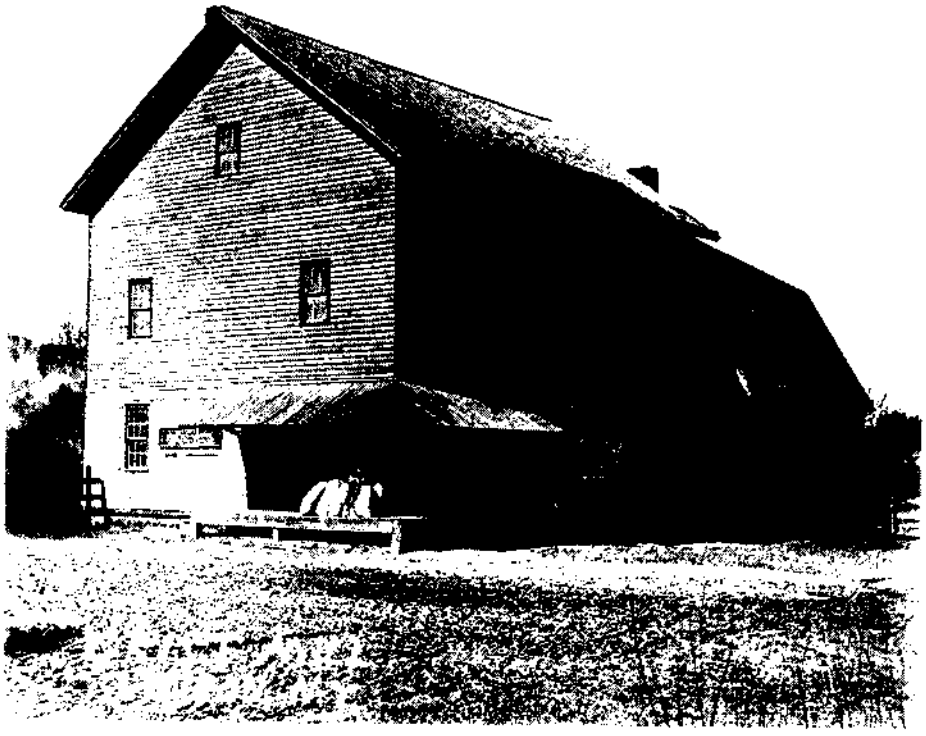

CHAPMAN GRIST MILL ON YOUNG STREET

TALL TALES FROM WILSON'S PAST

It is interesting to note that in the early 1800's, Wilson was once a part of a local pony express system, and the first rider was 12 year old Richard Holmes, son of Daniel Holmes. Daniel was Wilson's first mail carrier, and his route extended from Olcott to Youngstown. His son, Richard, was granted permission from the Postmaster General to carry mail by horseback , thus establishing the Olcott/ Youngstown Pony Express route.

There are many unusual stories such as that in old history books, and "old timers" can tell amusing stories from their earlier days as well.

The late Jenny Bigalow, for instance, was a Matron at the Niagara County Jail, and recalled an incident that occurred one time prior to a November election when a local politician visited at the jail to drum up support for his upcoming election. According to Jenny, some pretty shady characters inhabited the jail, and when the politician walked by some ladies of "ill repute", one of them called out to him, "Hey, don't I know you?" Jenny said the politician's face turned a bright red, and she couldn't help but smile when he beat a hasty retreat out of there.

Margaret Wilson once asked if we knew where the "liar's bench" used to be in Wilson. When we said "no", she went on to explain: It seems there used to be a large tree on "Sunset Island" near the electric lift at Miller's Boathouse. A bench was built around the tree trunk where friends used to gather and swap stories about the weather or other "juicy" news items of the day. Jake Miller, in particular, liked to sit there and spin some of his "tall tales", and it wasn't long before the popluar hang-out became known as the "Liar's Bench".

There probably aren't too many people around Wilson who ever heard about the time the girls at the Haner Dry House went on strike. They were paid fifty cents a day for their labor, and decided they should get a ten cent raise. On November 14, 1885, they walked off the job and told Mr. Haner they would come back when he agreed to pay them sixty cents a day. Mr. Haner, however, was not about to be told how to run his business, so he asked the girls to report to his office and pick up their pay checks. His firm stand prompted the girls to reconsider, and they decided that fifty cents a day would be better than nothing. All but three returned to their jobs, and as far as we can determine, that was the only strike ever held in Wilson.

Although Wilson had its share of Dry Houses for drying fruit, the residents themselves were not in accord with having a dry town. In fact, when the Presbyterian Church was built in 1834, it was reported that "brandy flowed freely". Also, liquor was cheap because, in those days, one bushel of corn would pay for six quarts of whiskey. Cheap liquor and gambling went hand in hand, and customers at the local bars often rolled dice to see who would pay for a round of drinks. In 1895, the village passed an ordinance to ban gambling, but the local bars devised ways to get around it. One way was for bartenders to place lumps of sugar before each customer, and the first one to have a fly light on his lump of sugar would be liable for the drinks. Shrewd bartenders seldom paid for their drinks, since they put turpentine on their sugar lumps and it would keep the flys away.

TALL TALES FROM WILSON'S PAST

Wilson's jail was located between the old Nevy store and Sanford's Tile Yard that stood next to the Masonic Hall. It was built in 1900 when the old Collegiate Institute gave way for a new brick Union School, (Site of the present Town Hall).

In the early 1920's, the jail was moved next to the old water tower that set near the Flagler's Welding Shop on High Street. It was reported to have two cells with latticed steel doors, and each cell was equipped with bunks, mattresses, blankets, electric lights, and a stove for heat. The jail was used occasionally up to the year 1932 and then was disposed of.

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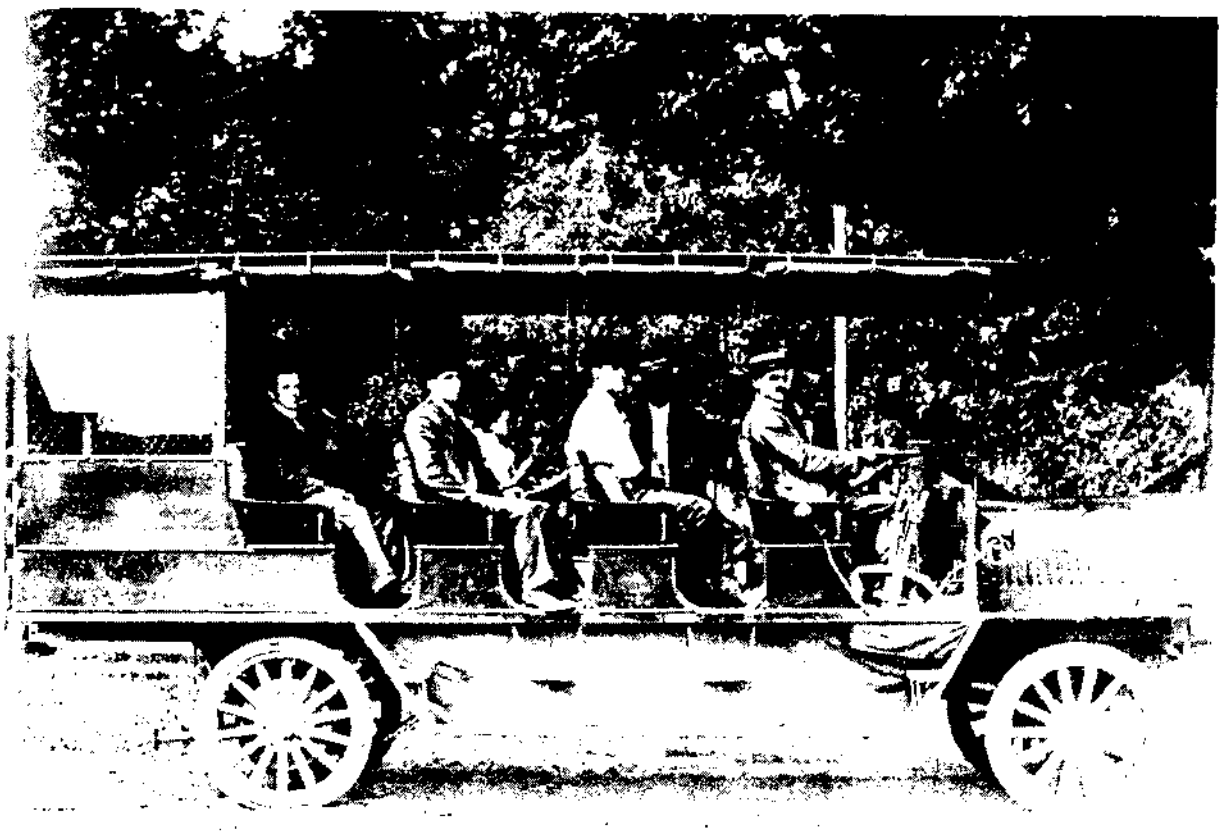

OLCOTT - WILSON BUS, ED JOHNSON, DRIVER

WILSON'S ICE AGE

Ever since we can remember, people have been figuring out ways to keep cool in summer, and even the old pioneers who settled on the prairies soon learned that a sod hut could protect them from the summer heat and help keep them warm in winter.

Les Clark of Hayward, California, who was raised in Wilson, recalled how his folks would keep their windows open from the top and bottom to get better air circulation in a room; and some of us can remember how our grandparents used to hang wet sheets over open doors or windows to help cool the house in summer.

Ten foot high ceilings were built into homes to allow heat and fumes from wood-burning stoves to rise above the head-level, and even though people didn't hear much about wind chill factors, they knew that open windows and cross ventilation made a room more comfortable.

Ice boxes were widely used to preserve perishable foods and in the winter, window boxes would keep food safely outside, but still be easily accessible from the inside.

Les noted that old friends used to butcher cows and pigs and hang the meat in unheated rooms where it would freeze solid until needed--then all one had to do was cut through the meat and bone with a meat saw. Some meat that wasn't frozen was also smoked or "sugar cured", then hung from rafters until ready to use.

When he was a boy, he used to watch while men sawed blocks of ice from the frozen-over Twelve Mile Creek, then drawn by horse and sled to Ackerman's Dairy where the blocks were placed in an ice house and covered with sawdust.

According to Mr. Clark, ice was also manufactured at the Wilson Cold Storage, and Bill Schnoor and "Curly" Loomis were the ice-makers. Three hundred pound ice cakes were made in a pool consisting of a salt brine solution which was cooled by an ammonia heat exchange process. Ammonia gas was compressed by use of a large diesel engine. (This engine was owned by Gordon Mawhiney of Wilson and has been exhibited and operated at Historical Society Memorial Day Fairs.)

The ammonia cooled saltwater solution was brought down to 27 degrees Fahrenheit which easily froze the water into 300 pound blocks of ice. The blocks were then stored in the Cold Storage building to cool the apples brought there in the fall. In the spring, the ice was sold. Prior to selling it, the blocks were scored with gang-saws so that anyone with an ice pick could separate the block into 25, 50, or 100 lb. cakes of ice. The ice was then sold to private homes, bars, and stores, or used for "icing" railroad cars filled with fruit for shipment around the country.

Another revelation showing the ingenuity of people before the advent of modern refrigeration, was the use of underground springs directed through a cellar to cool milk and other milk products. The method was quite effective as spring waters usually were about 45 degrees.

After World War II, the ice business fell off as new refrigeration units replaced the ice boxes and drip-pans previously used in most homes.

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ACTIVITIES AT WILSON HARBOR

The natural harbor at Wilson has always been a magnet for small boats, fishermen, and other recreational pursuits, but in the mid 1800's it was the site for much ship-building and produce-shipping activity.

It is recorded that the first steamship to visit Wilson, the "Ontario", entered the harbor in 1817. It was built at Sackett's Harbor in 1816 and plied the lake waters until the 1900's.

In 1817, butt staves and other timber was shipped from Wilson to Cape Vincent and other harbors on the St. Laurence River where they were floated to Montreal and Quebec. Much of the heavy timber was shipped to England where it was used to build frigates of war. The lumber industry flourished until all the great oak forests between Lake Ontario and the Ridge were depleted.

In 1846, Luther Wilson obtained permission from the U. S. Secretary of War to build two 200 foot piers into the lake--one on each side of the mouth of Twelve Mile Creek. The channel was dredged out by horsepower at Luther's own expense, and it was about that time that Abram Vosburg was appointed the first Customs Agent for the Port of Wilson.

Luther also built a large warehouse by the harbor and began to buy and ship grain and fruit. He also established a shipyard where the first schooner, the "Reuben F. Wilson" was built to run produce between Wilson and Oswego. During the next twenty-five years over 20 ships were built at the harbor by itinerant builders including three assembled at the Putnam Yard at the west end of "Sunset Island".

During this period a number of ships were destroyed by storms off the Wilson shoreline--sometimes with loss of life. The schooner "Mary", for instance, was driven ashore by high winds and went to pieces just east of Wilson; in 1854 the schooner "Isobel" was driven ashore and lost her cargo during a snowstorm; two other schooners, the "Minerva" and the "I.C. Biggs" were also shipwrecked that same year. The "Fleetwing", which was built in Wilson, capsized offshore and although Captain Quick and other crew members were saved, his wife, son, and ship's cook all drowned. The stone marking their graves may still be seen in Greenwood Cemetery.

When the Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg Railroad, (better known as the "Hojack") came through Wilson in 1876, commercial shipping at the harbor began a steady decline, however, another industry was getting ready to take its place.

It started when W. N. Harris acquired the beautiful pine groves around the inner harbor, and established what would later become known as "Lake Island Park". It developed into one of Western New York's most popular summer resorts during the late 1800's, with hotels in the village and on the "Island" such as the "Sutherland", "Tower House", "Harris Cottage", and "Pittsburgh Hotel" catering to the tourist trade.

A pavilion was erected for dining and dancing, and there was plenty of space for a ball diamond and other sports activities. There was also a toboggan slide for bathers and dozens of boats available for fishing and cruising.

ACTIVITIES AT WILSON HARBOR

A main attraction was the "Parade of Boats" which was held during the evening hours in summer when vessels of all sizes and shapes were trimmed with lanterns and floated up and down the river to the accompaniment of soft music played on mandolins and guitars.

One of the outstanding days of the year was the last Saturday in July when the annual picnic of the Niagara County Farmers Association was held there. It was a day when thousands of farmers and their families arrived in Wilson before dawn and remained well into the night.

Many visitors came to Wilson via the "Hojack" while hundreds more patronized the excursion boats that made regularly scheduled runs between Wilson and Toronto.

Lake Island Park slowly gave way to other interests when the automobile arrived on the scene making it possible for people to get to other places more easily. The harbor, however, never lost its appeal to boating enthusiasts or fishermen and , to the present day, is the center for many fishing derbies or other activities.

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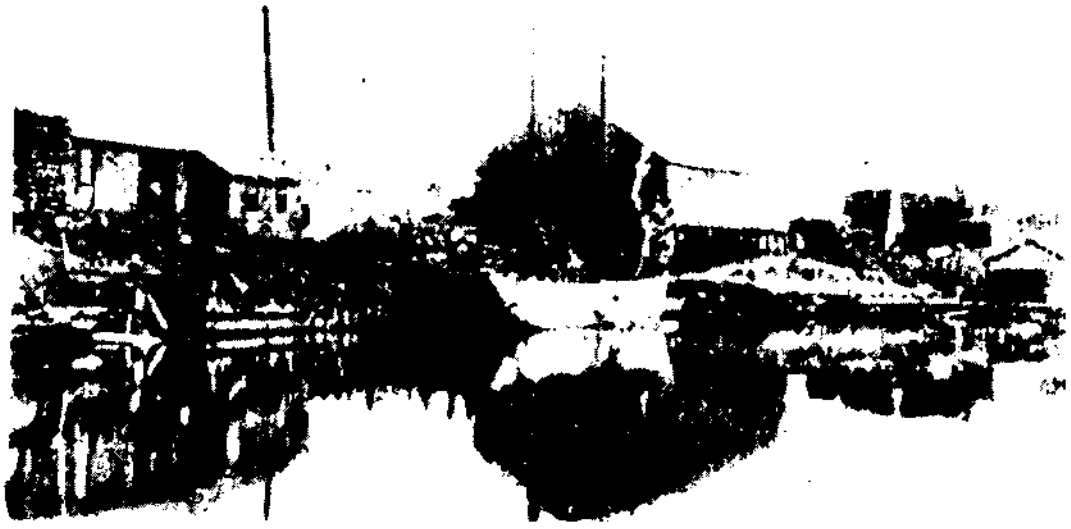
WILSON HARBOR
CIRCA — 1870



WILSON HARBOR 1870

STATE HIGHWAY OPENS WILSON

Harriet Nelson died at the age of ninety-six. She lived at the corner of the present Nelson Road and Route 425, and in her lifetime saw the townline road develop from an Indian trail to a log or corduroy road to cobblestone and finally a concrete state highway which was completed in 1920. She once told her granddaughter, the late Alice Nelson of Oriskany, N. Y. that when the concrete road was being built, many of the original logs were found buried beneath the roadbed.

Paving the highway was heralded as one of the greatest events in the history of the town of Wilson, and when the highway was completed a celebration was planned starting at 10:45 AM on November 1st. The whistles of the Niagara County Preserving Corporation were blown to summon the people in the village to gather at the corner of the Ide and Townline Roads where the concrete work would be completed.

Approximately 300 persons assembled that morning including the Wilson Cornet Band who immediately began to play. Hervey Sanford also gave a short address and outlined the interesting manner in which the Townline became a traffic route opening a better way for people to travel to Lockport. He said that the route was originally an Indian trail and, in his words, "construction of the highway is one of the greatest events in our town and will not be forgotten".

When the last wheelbarrow load of cement needed to finish the last block was dumped, Supervisor Roland S. Singer was called upon for remarks, and he told of the difficulties encountered after the first contract was let out in 1915. He explained that the cost of the eight miles of construction totaled $170,000, but only three miles of the road was built by the original contractor, the Cheektowaga Construction Company of Buffalo. When they failed to complete the highway, the road was contracted to the F. G. Munn Construction Company who, in spite of having great difficulty in finding materials and help, finally completed the road.

The road was officially opened to traffic on November 13, 1920, and a luncheon was held in the Wilsonian Clubroom to celebrate the event. Even members of the Buffalo Automobile Club motored to Wilson to try the new concrete highway which, up until then, had been rutted and muddy. State Congressman Wallace attended and was invited to comment and the Ontario Band provided music while members of the Wilsonian Club served a standing lunch.

The completed highway, which was officially designated as the Wilson-Cambria Road, was eight miles long and extended from Brockway's Corners on the South Ridge to the Lake shore passing through the village of Wilson. It was constructed of sixteen foot wide cement blocks, and was practically straight over its entire distance.

It was believed that the new highway would provide easier connections to cities to the south. The cement blocks are no longer visible having been covered several times by asphalt and in 1994 the entire road was widened and repaved. New curbs and walks have been added where the road passes through the village giving the community a fresh, bright new look.

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THE 1900'S IN WILSON

Old Timers can recall a time in the early 1900's when there was no organized sports in the Wilson School, but many changes have taken place since the turn of the Century

Elmer Johnson owned the building next to the former post office on Young Street, and he got George Middleton to open a drugstore there with him. A large building behind the drugstore became known as Middleton's Hall, and it soon became the gathering place for most activities such as school basketball games, roller skating parties, dances, and also the site of the first movies shown in Wilson.

Saturday nights always drew large crowds to the village, and many men looked forward to Saturday evening as a time to get a shave or haircut. Few took the time to shave themselves and, even though there were a half dozen barber shops in town, there always was a line-up and you had to wait your turn.

The late Fay Campbell once recalled that his folks had wonderful neighbors, and one time when his father was sick, the neighbors pitched in and cleared a field of cabbage for him. He said it was not unusual for neighbors to look out for each other in those days.

It is interesting to note that much of the gravel used to build highways in Wilson came from the lakeshore along "Sunset Island". It was dug out by hand but dynamite was used to break it up. Horse-drawn wagons were used to haul the gravel from the island, but this could only be done in winter when the bay was frozen. Sometimes a team of horses and loaded wagon would crash through the ice and there would be a mad scramble to get another team of mules to pull them out. Many years later the huge holes left by the men who loaded the wagons could be seen along the "sunset beach" shoreline.

During the years of World War I, Wilson had a home guard consisting of 108 men. They drilled all winter in gray uniforms furnished by the government, and officers of the guard were Capt. Jules Weaver, 1st Lieut. "Butch" Bigelow, 2nd Lieut. Mark Wilson, 3rd Lieut. Harry Holden.

Also gone from the Wilson scene are the many skating parties that used to be held on 12 Mile Creek. It is recalled that as many as 200 couples could be seen skating on the ice at once, and Bess and Lou Crawford and Floyd and Margaret Wilson were considered to be two of the most skillful skating couples on the Creek.

During the early 1900's the automobile was still a novelty. Most drivers did not drive them in the winter but instead would jack them up on blocks and remove the battery and tires for storage.

Most transportation was still by horse and sleigh, and horse-drawn wooden plows were used to clean the sidewalks. Many youngsters liked to run after the teams of bobsleds and hitch a ride by standing on the runners and , for those who have experienced it, one of the most pleasant memories of those early years was when a dozen or more people would bundle up in straw-filled bobsleds and, with sleigh bells ringing, drive down the road. With voices ringing in song, it was a happy sight to see.

THE 1900'S IN WILSON

The early 1900's was also a period when fast talking con artists peddled "cure-alls" such as "Swamp Root" or "Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound" to a gullible public, and many were relieved of their money by medical quacks until the Pure Foods Act was passed in 1907.

The south border of the village was nearly a mile from the present boundary near the depot, and the place where the former "Hojack" tracks crossed Route 425 was then known as "Wilson Station".

Businesses located there included the Fredonia Preserving Company, the J. E. Pettit Coal and Grain Business; Singer and Johnson's Fruit House; the J. C. Wright evaporator; Singer Coal Yard; Pfeister Pickle Company; and the Taggart and Stevens General Merchandising Store. The store carried a large supply of merchandise such as hardware, tools, wagons, restaurant and meat market. They also had a fruit warehouse just north of the depot on a siding. The Wilson Lumber Company, located there, was then owned by Roland Singer, A. N. Dwight, and Alanson Bigalow.

An item in the 1898 Lockport Journal noted that "Wilson was very nice and sedate and woe be to the luckless person who might violate any of the village ordinances. Several that caught our eye were: Persons may not be found intoxicated on the streets; may not use profane language; incite fights; make noise, or discharge firearms on streets unless in self defense."

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FRANK SLOCUM'S BARBER SHOP ON YOUNG STREET

BAY HIGHLIGHTS

Lake Island Park, later know as Tuscarora Park, was acquired in the late 1800's by W. N. Harris and Dr. T. C. Walton. The park which then consisted of 100 acres of beautiful pine groves bordering 12 Mile Creek, was managed by Harris. The old Harris Boarding House, later know as the Tugwell Cottage, was famous as the "place to go" for summer vacationers, and stood along the south shore of the bay near the present Clark Marina. The park was popular as a picnic area and included a water slide, bath house, and row boats. In 1899, Mr. Harris completed a 40 x 70 building which was called the Garden Opera House. It was also said that Harris catered to a special clientele and allowed no liquor sales, desecration of the Sabbath, profanity, or bad conduct of any kind. The leisurely slow-paced activities of the late 1890's had little resemblance to those enjoyed at the Wilson Harbor today.

In 1904, Charles Snider, former editor of the Toronto Telegram, described a trip he and his brothers took to "Wilson Creek" when they were boys. When they sailed in the harbor between the old wooden piers, the sun was setting in the west, and they noticed that the piers which were made of timbers, were sunken and decayed forming a line of sagged and humped stone-filled cribs. They apparently had been set on sand, and when storm waves sucked the support from under them, they slowly sank beneath the water. The Harris Hotel commanded a prominent place across from the channel so the boys proceeded to sail their boat to the landing float of the pretty hotel where Mr. Harris stood on the dock to greet them. There they made arrangements to get supper, a room for the night, and breakfast the next morning--all for seventy-five cents.

Strangely enough, in 1904, no one they talked to seemed to know much about the history of the harbor. They did learn, however, that after the Americans captured Fort George in 1813, United State supply ships were chased into the Wilson and Olcott harbors where they were captured by vessels of the British fleet. Although Wilson was a small settlement following the War of 1812, an 1817 survey made by Commodore Owen of the British fleet, only marked Wilson as "12 Mile Creek" and showed no houses at all.

Actually, there was a lot of activity at the harbor between the War of 1812 and the 1900's. In 1846, Luther Wilson built the first set of wooden piers at the channel extending 200 feet into Lake Ontario--the same year that Wilson was made a Port of Entry.

Much food and grain was stored in the Wilson warehouse and shipped out to other lake ports such as Oswego. The "R. F. Wilson" named for Luther's son, was the first schooner with two masts built at the harbor. This was followed by twenty other schooners built at the bay.

Always an attraction to both fisherman and boaters, Wilson became a popular resort area at the turn of the century, and in 1900, William Wilson and his sons, Merle and Fred, started a commercial fishing business-setting nets as far as six miles out in Lake Ontario. This brought many other commercial fisherman to Wilson.

It was the same year that Clarence Tugwell moved to Wilson and established the Fredonia Canning Company on the present site of the Pfeiffer/Marzetti Company.

The enterprising Tugwell was not only instrumental in having electricity brought into the village but also, through his efforts, had the first water line laid along Lake Street to his canning company at the southern outskirts of the village.

The Tugwells had a modest home on Lake Street, and also acquired the Harris House at the harbor.

Today, very little is left to remind one of the days when Wilson attracted thousands of summer visitors to its shores. It is interesting to note, however, that during the prohibition era, the favorite spot for rum runners to drop off their booze, was behind "Wintergreen Island" where the Harris Boarding House once stood.

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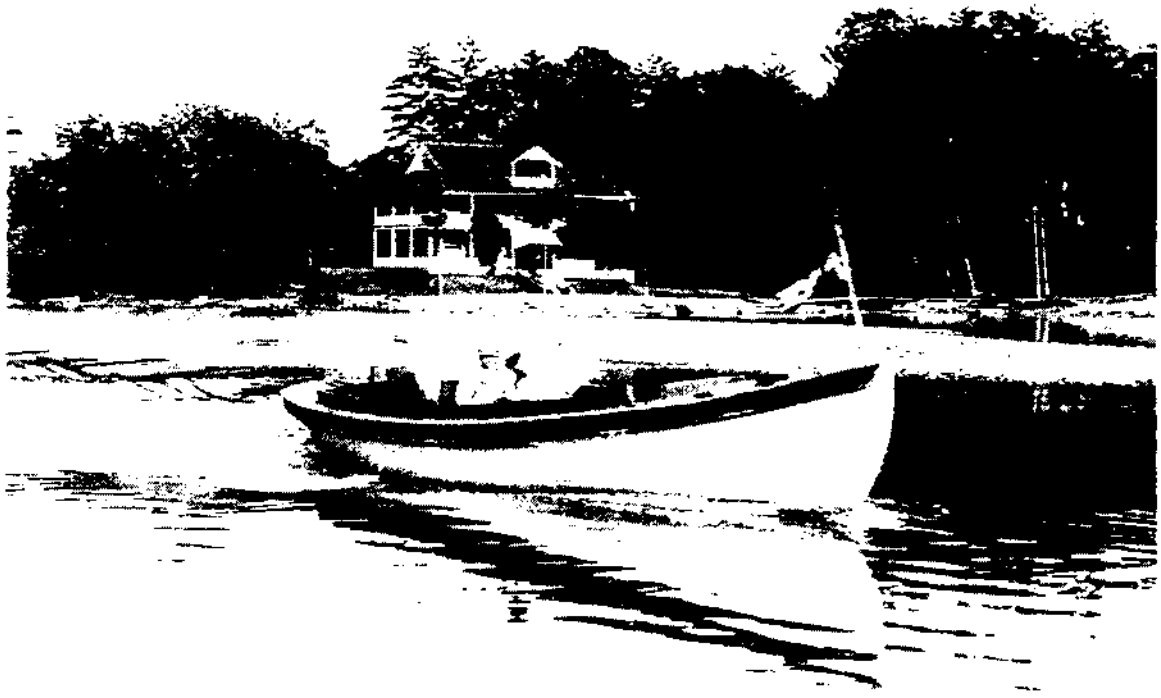


O-SO-EZE WITH HARRIS COTTAGE IN BACKGROUND

CHURCH EVOLUTION IN WILSON

The first Presbyterian Church was the first religious group to organize in the town of Wilson, and was started at the home of John Holmes on January 18, 1819. Rev. David M. Smith, pastor of the Lewiston Church officiated, and made John and his son, Daniel, ruling elders. The first regular pastor was called in 1823, and meetings were held principally in the schoolhouse at Ide and Townline roads.

In 1834, Reuben Wilson donated land for a church where the Catholic Church now stands, and the church was erected in the winter of 1834-35. This edifice was destroyed in 1894 when the adjoining Ontario Hotel burned down, however, the church was rebuilt with brick and stone and continued to operate until July 25, 1930, when the congregation was dissolved and the building was sold to the Catholic Church.

The Methodist-Episcopal Society in Wilson was first formed as a Class with the Lewiston Circuit on July 8, 1826. The following year a meeting was held to organize the church, and on January 2, 1836, the church was incorporated as "The First Society of the Methodist-Episcopal Church in the Town of Wilson."

A frame building was started in 1837, and the Rev. Dr. De Puy was appointed to the charge. The frame church was used until about 1883 when it was sold and moved one lot north where it was used for a farm implement shop and "Albright Opera House."

In 1884, the present Exley Methodist-Episcopal Church was erected with funds donated principally by the Thomas Exley family, and the building was dedicated August 18, 1885. In 1968 the Methodist Church united with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and the Wilson Church is now known as the Exley United Methodist Church, with services at 9:30 AM. on Sunday.

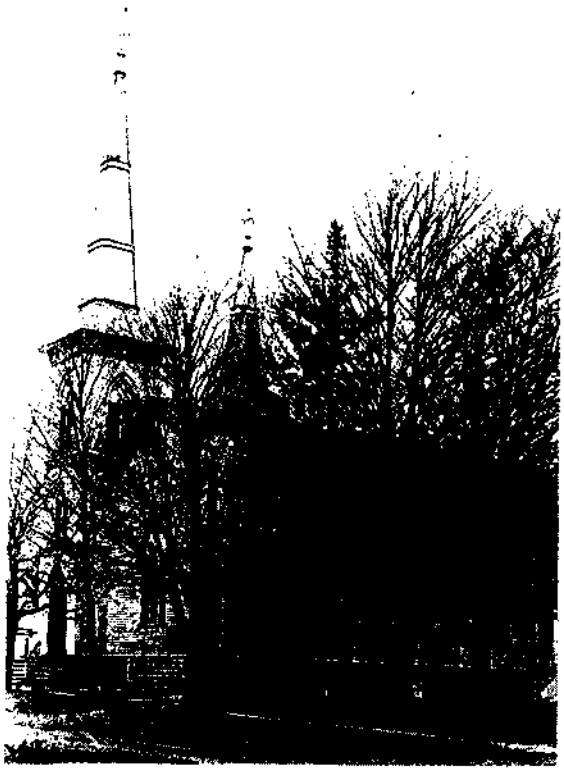
Another of Wilson's oldest churches is the First Baptist which was started at the home of Russell Robinson on Maple Road. Meetings were also held in District #4 schoolhouse where Rev. Amos Reed of Newfane sometimes preached. The group operated as a branch of the Newfane Baptist Church until October, 1839, when delegates from Porter, Yates, Lockport, and Newfane, assembled at the schoolhouse and recognized the Wilson Branch as a regular Baptist Church.

On April 21, 1838, the church convened in the cobblestone schoolhouse where the Wilson House Restaurant stands today, and with Rev. J. Halliday, pastor, held the first meeting of the First Baptist Church in the village of Wilson. A beautiful frame church was later built on Pettit Street and dedicated May 13, 1880. The congregation grew rapidly in both service and attendance, however, misfortune struck on July 3, 1917, when a fire of undetermined origin destroyed the church.

In 1919-20 the present First Baptist was built and dedicated on July 27, 1926, and during construction, services were held in the Presbyterian Church on Lake Street.

CHURCH EVOLUTION IN WILSON

In May, 1972, the church joined the new American Baptist Association of the Niagara Frontier. Rev. Jeffrey Durham is the current pastor. Services are Sunday morning at 11:00 AM



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
DESTROYED BY FIRE
1917

The history of the Concordia Lutheran Church on Beebe Road dates back to July 17, 1876, when William Schmidt and August Lampe presided over a meeting to organize the "German Evangelical Lutheran St. Peters Church in the Town of Wilson. An edifice was then erected on land donated by Ralph and Sarah Stockwell, and was dedicated at a service held on December 3, 1876. In 1880, St. Peters called its first resident pastor, Rev. G. Rademacher, who served for eight years. In 1918, the services which had been conducted in German, were changed over to English.

Rev. Carl Oldach was installed as Pastor in 1930, and a Parish House built next to the church. In 1947 the congregation voted to make the church independent and acquired the name, "The Concordia Evangelical Lutheran Church of East Wilson." In 1976, Concordia celebrated its 100th anniversary, and today, the present pastor is Rev. Wayne Jagow, with services Sundays at 9:30 AM.

CHURCH EVOLUTION IN WILSON

The Roman Catholic Church was first introduced to Wilson in 1910 when Msgr. James Lanigan visited Wilson and celebrated Mass in the Stedman Cottage on Harbor Street, and the Higgins Cottage on Ontario Street, formerly known as the "Old Glass Front."

In 1920 a small frame church was built in the village on Lake Street, and used until 1931 when the building could no longer accommodate the fast growing congregation. The former Presbyterian Church was then purchased and later dedicated as "Our Lady of the Rosary, R. C. Church. Rev. Father John L. Leising is the current pastor. Mass at 4:00 PM Saturday and 10:00 AM on Sunday

St. John's Episcopal Mission was organized in Wilson in 1929, and the first meeting was held in the Wilsonian Club, (Wilson House). The first church building was purchased from the Catholic Church who sold it to St. John's when they moved to the former Presbyterian Church.

St. John's was dedicated in 1930, and the first service was conducted by Rev. Henry Swicker. Members immediately began to raise funds to pay for the building and by 1934 the deed to the property was officially presented to the Diocese of Western New York. In 1953-54 the congregation erected a Parish Hall, and the interior of the church was renovated and redecorated.

In 1980 St. John's celebrated its 50th Anniversary and , to the present day, continues to be one of the active congregations in Wilson. Priest, Rev. Alison Martin is the current pastor, and services are held at 10:00 AM on Sundays.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church on Young Street is one of Wilson's youngest churches, and was started in 1936 with Rev. Ellbert Gleasner, pastor. Early meetings were held in rooms over the drugstore; the old fire hall; and the Masonic Rooms.

In 1938 the present church was erected at the corner of Young and McChesney Streets, and dedication services were held on April 23, 1939. By 1955 the bank mortgage was paid off, and a parsonage and building fund were established. The basement and kitchen were completed with all work done by the congregation and Rev. Renkopf.

In the 1930's the congregation expanded to a point where support of a full time pastor was possible, and from that time on the church continued to grow and reach out to the community. The current pastor is Rev. Ronald Haefer, and Worship service is at 10:00 AM on Sundays.

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THE NORTH RIDGE CHURCH

According to research done by Mrs. Dora Wakeman, former historian of the North Ridge United Methodist Church, the origin of the church began ca. 1815 when Aaron and Rachel Beach settled in Cambria, N. Y. Their daughter, Miss Olive, learned that a Rev. Mr. Ash lived at Four Mile Creek, and since there was nothing of a religious nature in the sparse community, she decided to walk 10 miles through the wilderness to see Rev. Ash, who agreed to form a Class at her father's "South Ridge" home. He proceeded to preach there every two weeks until a Rev. Shepherdson was sent to the Ridge by the Genesee Conference to form a circuit which included Dickersonville, East Wilson, and part of Ontario, Canada. This circuit, known as the Lewiston Circuit, was later divided into East Cambria and West Youngstown.

A small log schoolhouse across from where the North Ridge Church now stands, was where the Sabbath School was held with "Aunt Olive" as the first Sunday School Superintendent. Preaching services were held in an old store run by Calvin Wilson.

The plot of ground on which the North Ridge Church now stands was given to the congregation by Reuben Wilson and his wife in 1845, but the church edifice was not completed until 1848. At the time, it was a community church and any denomination could hold services there. The first minister to preach there, before the seats were installed, was Rev. Elijah Wood, who stood on a pile of lumber to deliver his first sermon. The church, built by Irish immigrants who had helped dig the Erie Canal, is a beautiful cobblestone building erected from water-washed stones from the shores of Lake Ontario.

In 1878, the trustees voted to rent the seats to help pay the minister's salary and other expenses, but in 1881 it was decided that the pews should be free. The following year there was only a balance of four cents in the church treasury, so in 1883 it was decided to again rent the pews. All the pews were considered free, however, if anyone arrived at church after the second hymn was sung.

In 1902, a notice was served on the board as well as the teacher in school #9, that children were not to climb the church steeple or throw stones through the church windows, suggesting that perhaps children were no different then, than they are today. Many years later, when the school next door was closed for centralization, the property was purchased by the church to make additional space for parking.

In the 1930's, plays were held to raise money to paint the church and pay the minister's salary, and one play was "Little Women", directed by Dora Wakeman. Enough money was realized from this production to send the young people to Silver Lake.

In 1907, when the furnace was installed, it had been discovered that the windows were in bad shape. A Memorial window was donated by the Women's Association, and other members followed suit with windows donated by many members and also the Alpha Class taught by Lucia Petty.

THE NORTH RIDGE CHURCH

For many years the Cambria Charge consisted of two churches, North Ridge and Dickersonville, and the pastor resided in the North Ridge parsonage. In 1941, North Ridge left Dickersonville and joined charges with Warrens Corners. In 1964, the East Wilson Church closed and its membership transferred to North Ridge. The East Wilson Church had been built in 1871 on lot #56, which originally was part of the Stephen C. Wakeman property. After the East Wilson congregation was transferred, the North Ridge Church became an independent charge.

Many of the improvements made to the North Ridge Church may be attributed to the supportive auxiliary groups including the present United Methodist Women. Their range of support has been expressed in many ways including public teas, ice cream socials, bazaars, rummage sales, and excellent dinners.

In 1992, Rev. Ronald H. Sellers was the pastor, and worship services were held at 10:15 AM on Sundays.

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NORTH RIDGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WILSON'S TONSORIAL PARLORS

When the Wilson Free Library acquired the property on Young Street, where the late Jim Stephenson operated his barbershop, the Wilson Historical Society proposed moving the building to the museum grounds. It was determined, however, that it would not be feasible to move the structure. Jim opened his barbershop there in 1969, and in addition to cutting hair, operated a watch repair business in an adjoining back room.

As far as we are able to determine, Wilson's first barbershop was opened by Frank Slocum in the late 1800's, and it was located next to the Perrigo Hardware store on Young Street. The shop burned down in the big fire of 1901 and after the block was rebuilt, a new shop operated by William Slocum was opened in front of Timothy Wilson's Bowling Alley.

When "Hub" Ferrin moved to Wilson from Springville, he lived on a farm near Plumb's Bridge on East Lake Road. Later, he purchased the Emerson property on Young Street and moved to the village. He opened a Tonsorial and Billiard Parlor in the two story building, and later expanded it into the "Hub Hotel".

Another barber, Arthur Bundy of Jeddo, came to Wilson in 1914. He was assisted by Ray Nevins who later opened his own shop. Around this same period from 1914 to 1925, Tom and John Costello also ran a barbershop in Wilson.

In 1925 Al Toenniessen cut hair in Bill Slocum's shop and also worked at different times for Ray Nevins and "Hub" Ferrin.

Ed and Louis Singer of Lockport opened a shop in Wilson around the early thirties, and about this time, another well-know barber, Max Ransom, came to Wilson from Ottawa, Canada. Max worked for "Hub" Ferrin for awhile, then opened his own shop on Lake Street. His small barbershop was later expanded to include a billiard parlor, both of which were located where Lakeside Market now stands.

Jack Perry was probably one of Wilson's best known barbers, and before moving to Wilson he lived on Coomer Road. He cut hair for about 35 years, and was well trained in his profession. Shops that he worked in included Powers of Newfane, Carls in Lockport, the Statler in Buffalo, the Park Hotel in Lockport, and Max's Barbershop in Wilson. After opening his own shop in Wilson, he cut hair for a number of years before going into the auctioneering business.

The Wilson Museum has acquired a number of artifacts related to the barbering profession, including a barber chair which the society's first President, Dr. John Argue used while cutting hair to raise money to attend the University of Buffalo. There are also two mirrors that came from the old Nevins Barbershop as well as a collection of razors, strops, shaving mugs, and other related items donated by members of the Wilson Historical Society.

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THE WILSON AUTOMOBILE COMPANY

One of the special attractions at the Wilson Museum are its antique and classic cars--but they probably would not be there today except for the interest and enthusiasm displayed by the society's first president, Dr. John F. Argue. When the historical society was founded in 1972, the good doctor turned the old "Hojack" depot over to the Town of Wilson on condition that it be used as a museum and meeting place for the organization. Dr. Argue used half of the building for storage but as improvements were made, he cleared his part, making the entire depot available to the society.

For many years he was an ardent collector of antique and classic cars, so it was not surprising when he decided to give the museum a 1904 Covert "Chainless" which he had acquired from the Ford Museum at Dearborn, Michigan in 1977. The Covert was originally built at Lockport by the B. F. Covert Company, and the model on display in the Wilson Museum is believed to be the only one of its kind left in the United States. Powered by a 5 horse water cooled engine, the car had a reputation of being a good hill climber, and was formerly owned by the opera star, James Melton.

Doctor Argue gave more cars to the museum, and it became apparent that a new building would have to be erected for them. In October, 1978, the society approved a proposal by the Planning Board to construct a new steel and concrete transportation building. Funds raised by the society were matched by the town to purchase materials, but the actual erection of the building was done with volunteer labor under the careful supervision of Ed Hastings, Art Schnoor, John Myers, and Whitney Barnum.

As more and more interest developed in the antique car project, research revealed that but for a strange twist of fate, Wilson might well have been one of the pioneers in the development of the modern automobile.

In 1900, the Wilson Automobile Manufacturing Company was started by Stanley Dwight in the Brook's Machine Shop which was located at the west end of Young Street. A year later, Brooks requested permission from the village board to test drive his new "Niagara" automobile through village streets, but his request was denied. He was told that the noisy machine would not only scare the horses, but some of the residents as well. Brooks, however, would not take no for an answer, and won the board over after telling them how many people owned horses that were not properly broken in and therefore, should not be allowed on the streets. He insisted that "my automobile obeys every command and is always under control".

The late Fay Campbell remembered the first "Niagara" automobile well, and recalled that he was given one of the first rides in it when he was a boy. He said that it looked like a buggy seat on a platform with four wheels, and was steered with a handle on a bar attached to the front axle. By 1903, more elaborate models were being produced with a carriage-type body, steering wheel, and kerosene headlamps.

THE WILSON AUTOMOBILE COMPANY

George C. Whiteside was Dwight's chief mechanic, and through his ingenuity, he developed some innovations on the "Niagara" that were well before their time. In 1903 he designed the first tilt steering wheel, also a transmission that transferred power to the wheels with a drive shaft rather than a sprocket and chain.

The Wilson Automobile Company ran into financial difficulties in 1905, and the firm's assets and equipment were purchased by the newly formed LaSalle-Niagara Automobile Company of Niagara Falls. After the sell-out, George Whiteside left Wilson and took his patents to the E. R. Thomas Motor Company of Buffalo and, as an engineer for Thomas, helped equip stock cars for racing including the "Thomas Flyer", the "Grand Prix Racer", and the "Around the World Car".

In 1982, while we were on a visit to the antique car museum at Stone Mountain, Georgia, we learned that George Whiteside had later moved to Georgia where he died at the age of ninety-three. Thomas Protsman, curator of the Stone Mountain Museum, told us that he and Whiteside had been good friends--in fact, he was the executor for Whiteside's estate when he died.

In 1987, a new larger building was erected north of the first building to accommodate the increasing number of cars. Dedicated as a Memorial to Dr. John F. Argue, the building was improved as quickly as funds became available.

The first Chairman of the Antique Car Building was Bob Rose, who was succeeded by George Linnabery in 1986. He was followed by Jim Pisello in 1988 and Wally Goodman and Clark Stimson took over in 1990, and in 1997 Wally Goodman and Bill Rose were elected Co-Chairman of the Argue Antique Car Building.

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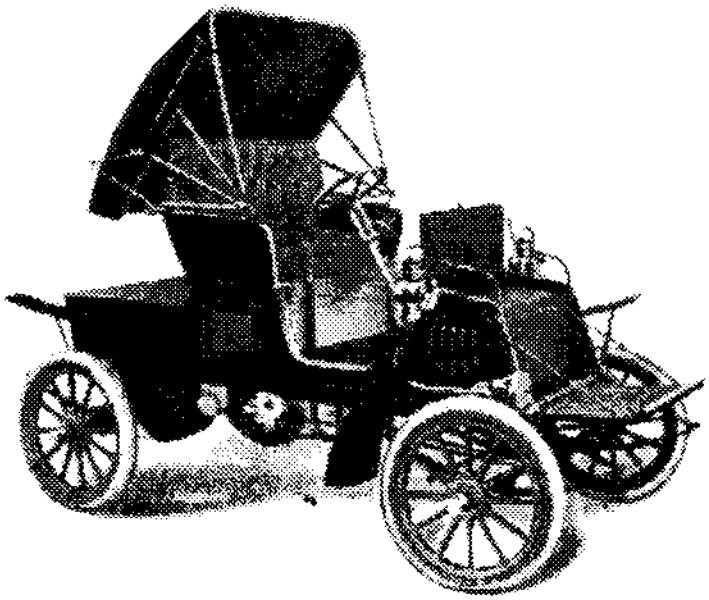

"NIAGARA"
AUTO MADE BY
WILSON AUTOMOBILE
MFG CO IN 1903

MOVIE MEMORIES

When you drive out of the Lakeside Market parking lot into Young Street, old timers may recall that the area was once the site of the former "Gem" Theater. Built in 1920, the movie house was erected by Seymour Erion and Henry Giles. Ida Erion and Ada Giles sold tickets for the movies which were then silent, so piano players were hired to accompany the action on the screen. Some of those well-known pianists were Earl McCormick, Marjorie and Frances Hurlburt, Helen Borngraeber, Alice Nelson, Laura Eick, and Florence Partington Porter.

Erion and Giles sold the "Gem" to Michael Radigan in the 1930's, and the building stood idle until 1936 when Francis Tate moved to Wilson, and bought the movie house in 1938. In a September edition of the Wilson "Star" the following item appeared: "Beginning Tuesday night, September 1, 1936, Wilson will have its own sound motion pictures at the "Gem" theater. New Victor equipment is being installed and local residents are promised the finest quality modern picture reproduction". The theater was a popular attraction in Wilson for abut 20 years, and some newsletter readers may recall going there to see two classic movies, "Gone With The Wind" and "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs".

Occasionally there were times when the management was hard pressed to preserve order, and the late Bob Horton remembered one time when, as a boy, another youngster sitting behind him jabbed him in the rear with a hat pin. Bob let out such a howl he was ejected from the theater--which seems to bear out the fact that the perpetrator of a crime is not always punished.

During the 1950's the "Gem was run by Harold Smith and some of the people who worked there included Don Hammond, Rodney Toenniessen, Susie Scheffler, Danny Lort, "Skip" Pettit, and Bob Steinman.

The movie era in Wilson ended in 1960 when Mr. Tate sold the building to Duane Hill, who turned it into a billiard parlor. This venture came to an end when fire destroyed the place on November 18. 1967.

The first silent movies were actually shown in Wilson at the Tuscarora Park-- 20 years before the "Gem" theater was built. At that time, Timothy Wilson supervised most of the events held at the park, including movies which were shown in the old open pavilion. Whenever a show was held, it was necessary to place canvas curtains around the building to make it dark inside. A hand-cranked carbon-arc type projector was used and Timothy's son, Floyd Wilson, operated the machine. Sometimes, when his arm got tired, he would slow it down, so the images on the screen would begin to appear in slow motion.

Movies were later shown in Middleton's Hall behind the drugstore. In 1910, the Conant and Bryant Power Company bought land on Harbor Street, and ushered in the new age of electricity in Wilson. It then became possible to purchase an electric projector to use in Middleton's Hall. One of the first Movie-News films shown was the presidential election of 1912. A few years later the silent "flicks" featured Pearl White in her serial "The Perils of Pauline" and the greatest heartthrob" of all was Rudolph Valentino who "wowed" the ladies with his portrayal of the movie, "The Sheik".

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CHICKEN ON SUNDAY AT THE HUB

When the old Hub Hotel burned in Wilson in 1980, we discovered that the once familiar landmark had its beginning in the early 1900's. The one thing that always seemed to "pop up" when mentioning the "Hub" were the recollections of some old timers about the chicken and biscuit dinners that used to be served there on Sundays.

The "Hub" had its beginning after the disastrous fire on June 9, 1901, when most of the business establishments on the north side of Young Street were consumed by fire. The only store to escape the flames was Milo Vosburg's General Store that stood where Sheffler's is today. Also saved was Cuddeback & Cooper's Furniture store which, at that time, was located on the second floor of Vosburg's. The fire was discovered at 11:30 PM by Freeman Emerson whose gas light flickered out while he was shaving a man in his barber shop. The fire spread quickly, and soon the entire block was engulfed in flames. The scope of the fire may be well imagined when even the Methodist parsonage and adjoining barns, a block away, caught fire. However, the many persons fighting the flames managed to, not only save the parsonage, but the Sutherland Hotel as well.

It was about this time that Hubert Ferrin, a barber from Springfield, N. Y. came to Wilson and acquired the Emerson property. He started a barber shop and billiard parlor at the location--even using letters from the former Emerson Building sign to spell the Ferrin name over his new shop. Rows of shaving mugs were lined up along the front of the shop while pool tables in the back were an attraction to all the "young blades" in town.

The Sutherland Hotel, saved in the big fire, was a popular place for salesmen and visitors to stay, but when it burned in 1913 it is said that the hotel's former patrons used to go to "Hub's" barbershop and complain that there was no place to eat in town. Hub's wife, Ida, decided to take advantage of the situation, and started making up light lunches for the visitors, and when business prospered, Hub decided to open a restaurant. He hired his good friend, Bill Mudge, to enlarge the premises by adding on a dining room, kitchen, and third floor for living quarters. The new Hub Hotel soon became a popular place to eat, and there must be some around who remember Ida's Specialty, chicken and biscuit, which was served on Sundays. It is said that people from all around the area thought nothing of lining up in the street to get a taste of her famous dinners. The Ferrins' daughters, Vera Pease and Almira Burch used to wait on tables, and other waitresses included Marie Reynolds, Jean Wilson Kress, and Phyllis Chapman Hageman .

In more recent years, the Hub was run by Alex and Cecilia Andrasik, and continued its reputation as a good place to eat. For a number of years, it was the site for the dinner meetings of the Wilson Lions Club and the Womens Business and Professional Club of Wilson.

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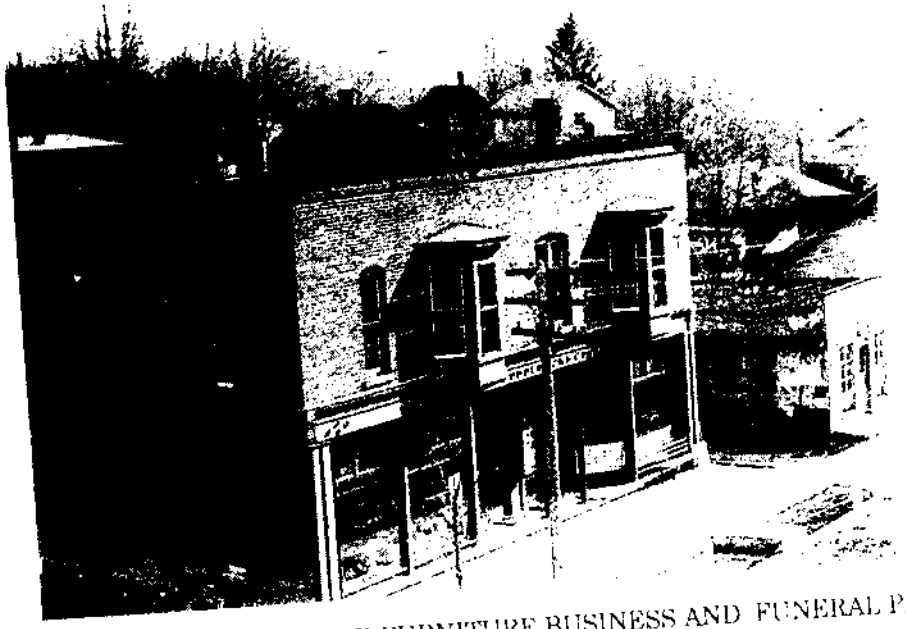
CHICKEN ON SUNDAY AT THE HUB

THE OLD HUB HOTEL IN THE 1930'S

WILSON'S OLDEST BUSINESS



CUDDEBACK & COOPER FOUNDED FURNITURE BUSINESS AND FUNERAL PARLOR 1869

WILSON'S OLDEST BUSINESS

The Hamilton and Clark Funeral Chapel, the oldest on-going business in the Village of Wilson, was founded in 1869 by Jerome Cooper who moved to Wilson in 1852. He started the business under the name of the Cuddeback and Cooper Furniture Store and Funeral Home. Kate Cuddeback was Jerome Cooper's daughter and she also operated the business. When her father died in 1914 at the age of 88, she continued to operate the business until 1918. That was the year she decided to sell out to LaMott Hamilton who worked for her, and Ray Clark, a Wilson native who worked as a salesman for the Friends' Manufacturing Company in Gasport. LaMott and Ray borrowed the money to purchase the business, and they took possession in the Spring of 1918.

Ray and his wife, Doris Fittro Clark, took up residence in the apartment above the store, and it was also the year the business became established as Hamilton and Clark. America was at war, and Ray Clark enlisted in the army and was sent overseas to France. Doris, in the meantime, accepted a teaching position in Pendleton. LaMott Hamilton's wife, Gertrude Mudge, died during the big influenza epidemic that fall, so Doris also worked at the store on Saturdays to help him out. When Ray Clark returned from France in 1919, Doris gave up her teaching position and again joined her husband in the apartment above the Hamilton and Clark store. Ray then attended Syracuse University where he received his embalmer's license.

In the early 1920's Hamilton and Clark operated a thriving upholstering trade, and finished goods were transported throughout the east on the now defunct "Hojack" railroad. In the early twenties, Kenmore was developing as a fast growing suburb of Buffalo, and it was decided to open a branch of the business there. Space was rented on Delaware Avenue between Lincoln and Victoria Boulevards, and the Clarks moved there in 1922 and bought a house behind the store at 15 Lincoln Boulevard. Since it was customary in those days to hold funerals in private homes, a room was added to the store where embalming was done.

Ray Clark died in 1926 at the early age of thirty-three, and neither Dayton Hardison, an employee, or LaMott Hamilton had the heart to embalm him so a Niagara Falls connection was used. Doris Clark and her daughter, Virginia Klaiber, and her son, Donald, remained in Kenmore, while LaMott Hamilton continued the business in Wilson. He married Carrie Pierce, but they never had any children. When he died in 1958, the business was purchased by Jack Naslund, who had married LaMott's niece. Donald Held, his partner since 1978, bought the business from Jack in 1987 and currently runs it assisted by Steve Gerehardt, who is also a funeral director.

The name, Hamilton and Clark is still used because the establishment always had such a fine reputation for quality merchandise and dependable service. In the 1990's the building was completely renovated and operates exclusively as the Hamilton and Clark Funeral Chapel.

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JOB DEVELOPMENT IN WILSON

There is some reason to believe that Wilson prospered over the years because of the individual initiative and nature of the people who lived in and around the town, and we need but look back to the Depression years of the 30's to remember how well Wilsonians were able to cope under great difficulties.

The make-up of the community was far different than it was in 1995, and during those trying times, farms provided most of the jobs for fruit pickers, day laborers, or tenant families. Farm lands were used mostly to supply household needs or the demand for produce in the local area, and many of the jobs available were farm related such as cider mills, canning factories, drying houses, or packing sheds where local fruit was prepared for shipment to larger markets.

During the war years of the 40's, area factories like Bell, Hooker, Dupont, Carborundum, and Harrisons, began to expand and provide more jobs for local residents who commuted back and forth. Farms also became larger and the demand for labor grew as young men and women were called to serve their country in the armed forces. Many of the jobs provided by defense industries were lost after the war, but some construction opportunities opened up with the building of the Robert Moses Power Plant. The housing and auto industries also began to pick up following their decline during the war years.

Some of the larger farm related businesses included the Wilson Cold Storage run by Art Loomis; Hinchliffe's Cider and Vinegar Mill; Hurlburt Brothers Canning and Preserving Co; Ackerman's Dairy and Home Delivery; Swann Bakery; Dan Carter Baskets; Roy Ward Auto Dealership; and Don Flagler's Welding and Equipment Repair Shop. Up to the 1960's farming became more mechanized and some of the larger operations included Larry Pease's Dairy and Apple Producing farm; Al Burrows, Apples and Fruit; Fay Campbell, Apples and Peaches; Alonzo Swick, Berries; and the Bill Kirchoff Gladiola Farms.

Wilson's steady growth and expansion is also supported by some other attractive features which makes it a pleasant place to live such as her natural setting along the lake, and a growing tourist industry supported by fishing derbies, boating, craft shows, and other local events like the Memorial Day Fair, Ice Cream Socials, Labor Day Flea Market, and Band Concerts.

Wilson is also considered a religious community with 6 denominational churches serving the populace including the First Baptist; Concordia Lutheran; Exley United Methodist; Our Lady of the Rosary R. C.; St. John's Episcopal; and St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Wilson's cultural institutions such as Wilson Central School, Wilson Free Library, Wilson Historical Society, Delphic Circle, and Gnostic Guild compare favorably with the best and organizations such as the Masons, Odd Fellows, PTA Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and 4-H Clubs abound.

Fire protection in town is capably handled by the South Wilson Fire Company, Wilson Volunteer Fire Company #1, and their efficient Volunteer Ambulance Service.

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OPERA HOUSE IN WILSON FOR 25 YEARS

In 1893, the former Methodist Wesley Chapel, which was moved to the lot next to the former Luther Wilson house at the southeast corner of Young and Lake Streets, was purchased by William Albright who opened a farm implement business there. Later, Mr. Albright decided to remodel the building and constructed a second floor where the Albright Opera House got its start.

The only thing left on the former Chapel to show that it had once been a House of Worship, was the distinctive stained glass church window centered above the implement shop. Entrance to the second floor was gained by an outside stairway that Albright built along the north side of the building. Just inside the entrance way was a ticket office where tickets could be purchased and ushers showed you to your seats. There was a balcony along the west side of the opera house which ran parallel to Lake Street, and the building was lighted with large kerosene lamps suspended from the ceiling. When electricity became available, the lamps were electrified, and footlights installed along the stage. The stage was at the east end of the theater with a piano at the north wing, and several curtain drops showing various scenes.

Over a period covering about 25 years, a variety of entertainment was enjoyed at Wilson's "Old Opry House", and local organizations sponsored many home talent plays there. The star of their productions was usually Dessie Tugwell, mother of Rex Tugwell of political fame. Many of the home talent plays were directed by Mrs. Alma Farrel, and short skits were often enjoyed between acts. A tap-dancing team starring Tommy Costello, son of a local barber, was very popular.

Traveling circuits were booked through a theatrical agency, and generally scheduled as main attractions. One show, "Uncle Tom's Cabin", created quite a stir one day when the two Great Danes who were supposed to rescue "Little Eva" when she crossed the river over floating blocks of ice, came up missing. Fortunately, the dogs were found running loose around the Wilson Boathouse, and were returned to the Opera House shortly before curtain time.

The late Harold Albright recalled one time when he was a boy, the medicine show were often held during regular performances. He remembered how they used to make their "Medicine" at Borngraeber's well which stood behind their house. He said they would add a few herbs to a lot of water, bottle it and then peddle it to gullible customers.

The performances that Harold liked best were the hypnotist shows. One time a member of the cast was put in a trance and , as he lay there, the hypnotist placed his hands over his body. Then, raising his arms the body would rise from where he laid. The hypnotist would then pass a large hoop around the length of the actor's body while the audience clapped and cheered. While helping to clean the place the next morning, Harold noticed two thin wires hanging from the ceiling, and narrow slots in the hoop which allowed the wire to pass through it. Even though he knew the secret it was still a great show. The Opera House era ended in the early 1930's when the building that was originally know as Wesley Chapel burned to the ground.

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MILLER AND BROWN

You are no kid if you remember the old Miller and Brown grocery and dry goods store that once stood at the corner of Young and Lake Streets--where Scheffler's Restaurant and Hardware Store stands today. The building was divided in two parts with groceries on one side and dry goods on the other, and the walls were about 12 foot high with shelves loaded with all kinds of groceries and household items. There were also two counters extending the length of the store separated by a five foot aisle.

Candy was contained in a quarter round glass display case, and penny candies included bubble gum, butter scotch wafers, licorice, suckers, and other one cent varieties. Cookies and crackers were displayed in glass front cases, and you could reach in and pick out what you wanted. There were many kinds such as fig newtons, oatmeal and molasses cookies, also elephant toes--a sugar cookie covered with peanut halves. Items such as kerosene, salted cod fish, and lard, were sold from the back of the room as well as potatoes, onions, and bananas. Along the west counter, oranges, grapefruit, farm grapes, and other fruit was available. There were no red meats sold at Miller and Browns, but a good supply could be had next door at Newt Hackett's store.

Kenny Welker and the late Willie Rockwood were clerks and, at the time, both had the reputation of being "quick as lightening" when serving customers. According to Lester Clark, when he was a youngster, Sam Brown hired him to do light chores like shoveling snow or cutting asparagus from a patch at Sam's home on Lake Street. He recalled that Sam was short on talk and seldom spoke except to ask him how he was doing. He said that Sam liked to smoke cigars but had one problem--he never seemed to be able to keep from losing his glasses from his forehead where he usually wore them.

Kenny and Willie wrapped and sold a lot of cheese which they cut from thirty pound wheels of cheese which were delivered to the store. Coffee was ground on a large coffee grinder with three foot wheels, and the ground coffee was a premium item wanted by everyone. The coffee grinder itself was painted red with gold filigree which made the machine look like a work of art. It, like many other rare antiques such as stoves were given in scrap metal drives by patriotic Americans during World War II.

Another rare item that people might not recognize today was a "Clapster" which was used to retrieve items from top shelves, and it was hung from a hook in the ceiling when not being used.

A large pot-bellied stove with isinglas windows was used to heat the store, and one similar to it may be seen in the Randall Road Schoolhouse which has been moved to the Historical Museum grounds.

Old Timers may remember the large stand-up scales that stood outside the store. Next to it was a place where the Newsboy could fold his papers before delivering them. If the weather was bad, both the scales and the newsboy were brought inside.

MILLER AND BROWN

Les recalled that Sam Brown helped quite a few young people in his day, and remembered how he used to spend a couple hours in the store every Thursday afternoon reading Life Magazine. He believes this helped him brush up on current events and topics of the day.

Miller and Browns had a wide door separating the grocery store from the dry goods section which permitted customers to easily patronize both. One interesting item in Mattie Miller's dry goods store was a carousel that displayed "Coats and Clark" threads in a variety of sizes, strengths, and basic colors.

Produce such as farm eggs and butter were considered "barter" items, and many farm wives used to bring them into the store where they exchanged them for staples such as salt, sugar, spices, and other household items.

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MILLER AND BROWN STORE, CORNER OF YOUNG AND LAKE STREETS

PHARMACIES IN WILSON

In the early 1800's, many settlers in the Niagara region used herbs grown in their own gardens to counteract illness and disease, but as Niagara County developed, drugs and medicines were usually furnished by doctors or purchased at general stores. Before the drugstore licensing act of 1904, just about anyone could call their business a drugstore--and many did.

Although the history of early pharmacies in Wilson is a little obscure, we note that M. C. Betts and his Druggist and Apothecary Store was prominently advertised in the April, 1880 edition of the Wilson "Star". In 1887, Oscar McChesney was listed in the Niagara County Directory as a "Jeweler, Druggist, and Stationer", but on January 3, 1895, he sold his entire stock of medicines and drugs to a Mr. Norman Keck.

The late Bea Salisbury once recalled that the "Salisbury and Jones" drugstore used to operate on the north side of Young Street and, according to her, the first "Middleton Drugstore" was opened in 1905 in the old Masonic Building. In 1908 , George Middleton and Ronald Singer purchased the store owned by Bigalow and Salisbury, and then Clarence Johnson bought Singer's interest, and the store was operated by Johnson and Middleton. In 1909, Middleton's Hall, also known as the "Skating Rink', was built behind the drugstore, and soon became the focal point for many of Wilson's social gatherings. In the drugstore itself, customers could get an 8 oz. "coke" for five cents, or an ice cream sundae for ten cents. George Middleton ran the drugstore until 1936 when he sold it to his son-in-law, Charles Haner. Mr. Haner operated the drugstore with his wife, Edna, who worked as the pharmacist. When Mr. Haner died, his wife continued running the business until 1951.

It was during this time in 1943 that Mr. John Bieda, publisher of the Wilson "Star", bought the drugstore and re-opened it as the "Wilson Pharmacy". The Haners moved the Middleton Drugstore across the road and for a year or two there were two drugstores operating in the village.

In 1944, John Bieda sold the Wilson Pharmacy to Edna Haner, and re-purchased the Wilson "Star". He published the paper until 1945 when he was called into the service. He retained ownership of the paper, however, until 1950. Edna Haner moved the Middleton Drugstore back to its original location and operated the business until 1951 when she sold it to Gordon MacPherson. Mr. MacPherson operated the store until 1968 when he sold out to William Okoniewski.

Okie kept the drugstore in operation for 30 years, but in April, 1998, he announced that Rite-Aid of Ransomville, New York had purchased the business, but not his building -- thus leaving open the possibility that another drug company could someday open a new drugstore in Wilson.

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PHARMACIES IN WILSON

OKIE'S PHARMACY AFTER DISASTROUS HUB HOTEL FIRE IN 1980

HORTON'S HARDWARE

HORTON'S HARDWARE IN THE 1930'S

HORTON'S HARDWARE

Horton's Hardware on Young Street was possibly the most complete, old fashioned hardware store to ever operate in Wilson. The business was started around 1917 by Alfred Ernest Horton and Howard Treichler, and two of their early employees were Jim Wilcox and Lou Schrader.

Anyone familiar with the old Horton facility may recall that up through the early 30's, there were two identical appearing buildings on the site--with a narrow walkway separating them. There were two gasoline pumps in front of the stores. When you entered the building there was a long show case along the right wall containing knives, clocks, and pocket watches, and beyond that, cans of paint were stacked. On the wall opposite, there were cabinets containing tools, hardware, bolts, screws etc. On the wall opposite the paint cans, were racks for storing glass. Behind the glass rack a door opened into a business office. Extending across the back of the store was a counter with bins of nails beneath it, and in the center of the room there was a large six and one-half foot pot-belly stove. Stairs led to the second floor which was used for storing garden tools and lawn mowers in the winter, and snow shovels and sleds in the summer. The central area upstairs was used to store furnace grates while the back section was used for storing plumbing supplies.

A driveway along the east side of the store ran from Young Street back and around the building with an exit into Mechanic Street. At the rear side of the store there was a pipe rack in which all sizes of galvanized pipe was kept. Across the driveway from the pipe rack were rolls of fencing and barbed wire. A garage behind the store contained a Model "T" Stake Truck which was used primarily to transport heavy hardware to and from the depot. A nearby shed was used to store turpentine, boiled linseed oil, and denatured alcohol. Customers would bring all types and sizes of bottles and jugs to be filled--a practice that would hardly be allowed today.

When Horton and Treichler first opened the store, the west building was used to store furnaces, oil and gasoline stoves, bathroom fixtures, and room heaters. About 1930, Harvey Duxbury acquired use of the building and started a meat and grocery store. It was discontinued prior to the 1960's when the east building was demolished, and Robert Horton opened the hardware store in the west building.

The founder of Horton's Hardware, Ernest Horton, was not only a good businessman but also active in civic affairs. When the Wilson Volunteer Fire Company #1 was organized on September 17, 1923, he was elected as the company's first President. Some of the early meetings were held at Horton's where they used orange crates for seats as there was little money at that time.

Ernest Horton married Marion Stephenson, and they had two sons, Robert and Charles. Robert followed in his father's footsteps and took over the hardware store, and when the Village of Wilson celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1958, Robert was Mayor of Wilson. Robert and Helen's son Thomas took over the hardware store in 1980, but decided to give up the business in 1997.

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BIRTH OF THE UNION FREE SCHOOL

A copy of the June issue of Wilson's "Wise Owl" features a speech by the late G. Herbert Swick that he gave at the dedication of the New High School in 1936. His talk described some of the little-known facts regarding the history of the school.

When the old Collegiate Institute was started in 1845, it was decided that circulars would be sent to advertise the new school--and they proved to be very successful. When the doors opened in the fall of 1846, 339 applicants had applied for admission. Strangely enough, 199 young men and 140 young ladies between the ages of 17 and 25 years of age applied, and of this group, 140 men and 73 women were non-residents. Applications were received from Mississippi, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Canada. The out-of-towners readily found places to board in the village, and in addition, a long red dormitory was prepared for students who wished to board themselves. As has been noted before, moral standards were very high at the school, and all pupils were required to attend church at least once on Sunday. Students were also expected to be in their own rooms at 7:30 PM except on Friday evenings which were reserved for social activities. As other schools were built, attendance dropped in Wilson and by 1869, tuition money was inadequate to maintain the school and it became necessary to apply to the State Education Department for aid.

A proposal was made to unite four districts to form a Wilson Union Free School, but it was met with great objections--especially from the outlying districts. In fact, feelings ran so high many people would not trade with merchants that advocated "such an asinine project that would allow people to be taxed to support a free school." When it was time to vote, it resulted in a tie, so one enterprising gentleman, Reuben F. Wilson, asked Elder Garfield, (who loved to talk) to get up and make a speech in favor of the free school. While Garfield rambled on and on, Mr. Wilson raced to the harbor and asked Captain Bunn to get off his boat and accompany him back to the school. Captain Bunn voted "yes", and the Wilson Union Free School was born.

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WILSON UNION FREE SCHOOL - 1869

DEDICATED TEACHERS

When the late Carrie Hutchins graduated from Wilson High School in 1882, she was one of a class of six students. A few years later she married Albert Martin and lived on a farm in Cambria Center for nine years. When her husband suddenly died, she entered the Buffalo State Normal School from where she graduated in January, 1900. Carrie spent a short time teaching in New York and Long Island before returning to Wilson where she taught for thirty-five years. She won obedience through respect, and in all her years at Wilson, missed only one week because of illness. During that long career she taught under three principals, Charles Schenk, I. M. McIlroy, and A. W. Blemaster. She was asked how students were rated for graduation when she attended school, and she replied, "When we passed everything they taught us. Commencement activities ended the afternoon they began, and there was no Class Day, School Dance or Alumni Banquet." Carrie Martin was loved by her students and, in addition to her regular teaching, enjoyed many other activities including church attendance.

The late Fay Campbell was proud of a picture he had which showed him and twenty other boys that made up a class Mrs. Martin taught at the Wilson Methodist Church for many years. Fay once told us that Carrie had such a magnetic personality, "Nothing could keep us from attending Sunday School unless we were sick in bed or out of town." It is interesting to note that when Carrie Martin died in April, 1951, members of her former Sunday School Class were pallbearers at her funeral, Earl Carrigan, Kenneth Moore, Harvy Duxbury, Lloyd Duxbury, and Delbert and Harold Singer.

Students who graduated from the Teachers Training Class in Wilson around the turn of the century, were entering a profession that was generally limited to low pay and many restrictive regulations. Rules outlined for teachers in old publications seem to bear this out. In 1870, at Franklin, Mass., they had to adhere to some pretty stringent requirements if they wished to hold their jobs, and we quote:

"Men teachers may take off one night a week for courting--two evenings if they attend church regularly.

"After school, teachers must read the Bible or a good book until supper, and women teachers who engage in unseemly conduct, or marry, will be discharged.

"Every teacher will lay aside a goodly sum from each month's pay for old age so as not to become a burden on society.

"Teachers performing duties regularly and faithfully for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents a week in their pay--providing the school board approves.

Teachers were expected to abide by strict moral and dress codes, with no bathing suits, bloomers or split skirts that might allow the ankle to be exposed. They might also be expelled for smoking, drinking, or being seen in public dances or a pool room, which seems to boil down to the obvious conclusion--teachers are a lot better off today than they were around the turn of the century.

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SECRETS OF 1843 DIARY REVEALED

Thomas Leonard was a teacher at the District #7 Schoolhouse on Chestnut Road, Town of Wilson, from 1843-1844. Before coming to Wilson, he was a part time carpenter and wintertime school teacher, and previously taught in 1842-43 at the Shawnee School. The District #7 Schoolhouse was in its last stage of being completed and , as its teacher, his pay would be $15 per month including board and room. During his year in the "March Settlement" he kept a diary which characterizes him as being a devout man--sometimes a sanctimonious one, and thoroughly convinced that drinking was evil, tobacco was evil, and dancing was sinful.

On December 14, 1843, Mr. Leonard noted that "The young folks had a gathering at the house of an Irish man across the way, and they had a fiddler with whose music they kept time in the dance until about 1 o'clock. Three or four of my scholars were present, and I felt a little rebuked in thinking that my daily walks and conversation did not show forth my hatred to sin".

He found that his scholars wanted to learn "but were very backward. Some, from 15 to 20 years old, can not do a sum in simple arithmetic." He also wrote that he often felt discouraged "When I see the ignorance I have to contend with. It is the most backward school I have ever been in all my life".

At the start of the new year in 1844, Mr. Leonard found himself having difficulty coping with unruly students, so he went "to a neighboring swamp and cut himself a couple of whips and brought them to the school. I trimmed one of the whips and laid it in sight. I had expected I would have to use it, but was able to pass the day very pleasantly".

"January 15th was the appointed day for County and Town inspectors to visit my school, and Dr. McChesney came about 1 1/2 o'clock, and Mr. Mills came about 2 1/2 o'clock. Five or six inhabitants also attended including trustees R. Woodcock and Mr. Bull.

"That evening we went to Halseys and I asked Mr. Mills and Dr. McChesney their opinions in regard to the school. Dr. McChesney said that there were few schools ahead in arithmetic and grammar, and none ahead in order.

"It was customary for rural district school teachers to get their room and board from the local trustees or other inhabitants, so I roomed with Mr. Woodcock and Mr. Bull, among others. At Mr. Woodcock's I lodged in an upper room where from the rafters were suspended several 'broad sides' of pork, (nearly as they came from the hog) except being salted, I suppose. The floor was nearly covered with corn, etc., but I had a good bed and slept soundly.

"The days I spent boarding at Father Bulls were pleasantly spent, and seldom have I found a more obliging family where I felt right at home. Besides the four boys who attended school, there were two young women in the family.... I appreciate the good life and I shared there in abundance.

" On January 24, 1844, I was called to decide an argument two large boys had about "seats". I had Eugene Pollard stay after school, and punished him by giving him three blows on each hand with a ferule.

SECRETS OF 1843 DIARY REVEALED

"I forget to mention that I kept William Streeter one hour after school last night. He admitted he had done wrong and promised to do better in the future. I also had to cuff the ears of Miss Matilda Adams rather severely toward the end of the school day.

"I ordered some of the scholars to leave their seats and take others, and had some of the boys sit on the girls' side, etc. Mr. Henry Woodcock, a young man of 20 years old said ' if he had to sit there he would not come to school! He was as good as his work, and on January 26th he dropped out. I explained the matter to his parents.

"On February 1st there was a 'wood bee' at the Halsey's which the large boys attended. I retained Charles Halsey after school and punished him by giving him three blows with a ferule. His offense was that I asked him a question during recitation in arithmetic and he answered 'I don't know--no, I don't care'.

"Went to Stockwell's on Friday, February 16th., and learned that they had about 40 or 50 present at last night's chivaree. The loafers were collected about the house and made musick on various instruments, viz., squackers, tin horns, bugles, etc.

"I started for Lockport at 9 1/4 o'clock where I spent the remainder of the day with Miss Eliza Hixon. The confinements of a school teacher, in whatever district he is placed, is confinement, but confinement in a district school in the 'Marsh Settlement' is bordering on the superlative. I returned to Wilson on foot and spent the next evening at the Stockwell's--mostly hearing of them talk about the wedding and its accomplishments.

"Heard a lesson from Brother Buck who talked plainly of those professors of religion who continue drinking intoxicating liquors, or go to countenanced dancing parties. To all he said, I responded "Amen"!

"On Saturday, March 2nd, I started for Lockport after breakfast, as bad as the going is on foot. The idea of spending a Sabbath in District #7 in the Town of Wilson, is not very pleasant, therefore I am willing to endure a little--yeah, much mud to get away.

"March 9th is the last day of my school. I had the usual number of scholars in the A.M., in addition to 4 or 6 more in the P. M., also Mr. Halsey, Mr. Bates, Miss Farnham, and Miss Bull were present. I closed school by delivering to them an address that covered a sheet of foolscap."

(Note: The above item is compiled from 14 pages of extracts from the 1843-44 Diary of Thomas Leonard. The interesting material was provided to us through the courtesy of Dr. Warren Button, a member of the Wilson Historical Society, and former Professor of History at the University of Buffalo.)

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RANDALL ROAD HISTORY

Wilbur R. Reese of Williamsburg, Virginia, had a illustrious career after he graduated from Wilson High School in 1934. He later graduated from Buffalo State College in 1938, and in 1941 became a Naval Aviator during World War II, and served aboard five different aircraft carriers as a fighter pilot. He was promoted to the rank of Lieut. Commander and, after attending the graduate school at Ohio University, did research for a Psychological Corporation and internship in clinical psychology for the Akron, Ohio Public Schools. In 1949 he started the Mental Health Clinic for the City of Williamsburg, Virginia, and is listed in the 19th edition of "Who's Who in the South and Southwest". His hobby is genealogy and he has written 120 family genealogies since his retirement. Mr. Reese started his schooling in the old Randall Road Schoolhouse, District #8, in 1924 and entered high school at Wilson in 1931.

The Randall Road Schoolhouse was about 150 yards north of his home and, according to him, "If I ran fast past Durphy's house and a row of cherry trees, I could get there in a couple of minutes". It is interesting to note that the property on which the Randall Road Schoolhouse was built was donated by Henry Maham, an ancestor of Wilbur Reese, and the deed was recorded at the Niagara County Courthouse in January, 1861. The Randall Road was named for the Randall family, and Asa Randall, with his wife and children, came to Wilson and settled on what is now the Randall Road between 1820 and 1830. It was near the site of the Asa Randall cabin that Reese's ancestor, Henry Maham, built his house and barn.

In 1980, the Wilson Historical Society, under the direction of the late Dorothy Thilk, Town of Wilson Historian, began the tedious task of trying to find and identify some of the markers at the site of the abandoned Randall Road Cemetery. All of the stones had been covered up ca. 1910, and the plot was leveled, erasing all signs of a cemetery ever having been there. Some of the stones found and recorded through the efforts of Mrs. Thilk and other society members included the one for Asa Randall which revealed that he had died on June 5, 1858 at the age of seventy. His wife, Mary, was 59 when she died, and the unfinished date on her stone was May 17, 18--. Also located was the marker for their 12 year old son, Asa, who died on December 13, 1834.

Several other markers were identified including one for Timothy Bachelder, 45, who was born on August 21, 1788 and died July 11, 1834. The fact that some burials had been made in 1830 revealed that the old cemetery had been much older than previously thought.

In 1981, the Historical Sites Committee of the Wilson Historical Society, erected a historical marker at the site listing the names of all those interred whose names were identified.

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SCHOOLHOUSE MEMORIES

Thelma Patterson recalled some of the good times she had when she and others used to rehearse for plays at the Randall Road Schoolhouse. She said most of them were put on at the Ransomville Grange hall, but occasionally one would be performed at St. Peters on Church Street. She remembered one rehearsal when Seward Moot, who played the part of a wealthy invalid, was given "medicine" by his "nurse", Lillian Evans. Actually, however, she gave him a spoon full of coffee grounds--which he was seen spitting out for some time after.

Another time, Thelma played the part, opposite her husband, of a flamboyant old maid. She was supposed to faint and Stan would yell, "Call and ambulance--call the firemen." It seems that Jack Evans walked in when Stan started yelling. Jack had not seen the part they were rehearsing before, so he quickly ran across the road to Maloney's where he called the Wilson ambulance. A short time later, with lights flashing and siren blowing, the ambulance pulled into the schoolhouse yard. You can picture the look on the firemens' faces when Bob LeVan told them it was just a play and everything was all right.

It was in that same play that Thelma, the old maid, had to chase Stan all around the stage saying, "You're kind of a cute little runt at that." Don Seefeldt, who was also in the play "cracked up" and said, "Is that how it all started with you, Stan?" Hazel and Bob LeVan were prompters for the acting group which consisted of Lillian Evans; Gwen Heidenfeldt; Seward Moot; Don Seefeldt; Marvin Myers; Mrs. Frank Fenn; Jack Evans; Keith Moore; Stan Paterson; Thelma Patterson; and Carol Fenn.

In one play, Don Seefeldt played a part opposite one of the girls, and when he was unable to be there Stan took his place. During rehearsal, Stan told the girl, "Don't stand so close, you're steaming my glasses." Thelma said that with all the fun, it was a wonder anyone was able to remember their lines.

Most of the plays were murder mysteries, and one was put on for a bowling banquet at St. Peters Lutheran Church. It was a fun night and the cast said and did things that were not in the script. Mrs. Fenn, for instance, played the part of a colored maid so she had to blacken her face. She wore white gloves, and during the play she put them on her face--then showed her black and white gloves to the audience--it "brought down the house."

Thelma also recalled that in the "Roaring Twenties" she attended Wilson High School, and used to visit the little hot dog stand on the corner across from Welker and Brown's Store. There she was able to buy two hot dogs and a bottle of soda for 25 cents. Thelma remarked, "Do that today if you can." We thank Thelma for sharing some of her hilarious schoolhouse memories with us.

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RANDALL ROAD SCHOOLHOUSE RESTORATION AND DEDICATION

A group of residents in the Wilson Community initiated the plan to see the old 1861 Randall Road Schoolhouse moved to the Historical Society Museum grounds where it would be preserved as one of Wilson's most treasured traditions--the rural one room schoolhouse.

Most of the school houses that served children in the rural area have been converted into houses with the exception of the Randall Road School which was spared when it became a Community Centre. Since the building belonged to the Wilson Central School District, the school board was approached by the community committee and the board agreed to turn the building over the the Town of Wilson.

In order to move the building to the museum grounds, a steering committee composed of Jean Figura, Chairman, Wanda Burrows, Secretary, Janet Sporleder, Corresponding Secretary, Ed and Marilyn Allgeier, Ways & Means, was organized to direct operations. Other members of the committee were Hazel Salisbury, Nina Mowell, Ellen Hibbard, Don Burrows, Patricia Rice, Denise Orzell, Martin Miller, Carol Fenn and Richard Schmidle.

Renovation of the school to its original condition was agreed upon, and the committee also proposed that it should be a "working" schoolhouse rather than just a museum type . For instance, teachers would be encouraged to hold classes there in order to allow children to experience first hand what it would be like to attend a rural school.

Contributions from school children, businesses, and individuals realized about $1500 and other fund raisers were held by the Wilson Mothers Club, The Gnostic Guild, Thomas Marks 4th graders, W. H. Stevenson Elementary PTA and 6th grade students, The Wilson Lions Club, and the Town of Wilson 5K Salmon Run. The Wilson Junior High PTSA also wanted to be involved in the project and sponsored a contest to find a logo for the "Save The Schoolhouse Project". The contest was chaired by Denise Orzel, and the winner was Nicholas Hageman. His winning logo appears on materials distributed by the Steering Committee.

In addition to the professional work done, like putting in the foundation, moving the school, replacing the roof, and painting it inside and out, there were several volunteer efforts made without which the project might not have been completed. Perhaps foremost among these were refinishing the school desks by members of Boy Scout Troop # 67; removal of the old flooring and scraping the building inside and out by members of Niagara County Sheriff Tom Beilein 's work crews; and the wonderful response from teachers of Wilson Central School who installed all the desks and furnishings in the school.

The Steering Committee applied for and received grants from the Niagara Council of the Arts which allowed the committee funds to purchase books, furnishings, and clothing for use in the school. A $12,000 grant received from the New York State Parks and Historical Preservation Department was used toward the cost of moving the schoolhouse to its present location. This grant was received through the offices of Assemblyman Joseph Pillittere.

RANDALL ROAD SCHOOLHOUSE RESTORATION AND DEDICATION

RANDALL ROAD SCHOOLHOUSE RESTORED 1996 - 1998

Early in the project, the Historical Society agreed to be responsible for building the foundation on which the building would be placed On August 6, 1996, the school was moved by Farley Riggers of Lockport and placed on its new foundation. An experienced carpenter also offered to reconstruct the bell tower on the school. Since that time, renovation projects and fund-raising prepared the school for its dedication.

Over 250 people assembled at the museum grounds on Sunday, May 18, 1997 for the dedication of the Randall Road Schoolhouse.

Rev. Ronald Haefer, Pastor of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Wilson was master of ceremonies, and he introduced the following dignitaries who spoke briefly on various aspects of the schoolhouse project: Jean Figura, Chairman of the Steering Committee; Richard Zipp, Superintendent of Schools; Senator George B. Maziarz; Assemblyman Joseph Pillittere; Mayor Jerry Dean; Supervisor Walter Evans; Donald Burrows, President of Wilson Historical Society; Wanda Burrows, Chairman of Wilson Historical Schoolhouse Committee; and Karen Raccuia, Principal of Thomas Marks School.

Following the program the schoolhouse was opened to visitors with everyone present expressing favorable comments. Guests were then able to go to the Barnum Building where they were served cookies and lemonade.

It is the policy of the Wilson Historical Society to have a chairman and committee responsible for each of the buildings on the museum grounds. An appropriate committee was appointed for the Randall Road Schoolhouse.

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1972-THE YEAR OF THE WILSON MUSEUM

It seems only a short time ago that a small group of Wilson residents attended a meeting at the Town Hall on October 16, 1972, and watched as the late Dr. John Argue gave the 1912 depot to the Town of Wilson for a museum and meeting place for the newly organized Wilson Historical Society. Supervisor Whitney Barnum accepted the property for the town, and under Dr. Argue's leadership, the society embarked on an ambitious program to build a museum facility that has since exceeded all expectations.

In 1973, meetings were held in the depot waiting room, but half of the building was still used to store antique trucks and auto parts. The new organization grew rapidly, however, so President Argue turned the entire building over to the society's use.

The first renovation work was done by Ollie Clark and Joe Higgins who removed a long wall connecting the waiting room with the express room. The additional space made it possible to build a Library and two Rest Rooms. We recall how carefully Ollie and Joe matched and refinished the wainscoting that had been removed. That was the beginning of an extensive remodeling program that involved most of our early members.

The ladies invaded the museum with scrub brushes and mops, and soon had the place spotless. Members of that "scrub brush brigade" were Jean Argue, Helen Borngraeber, Ella Mae Baker, Becky Baker, Dorothy Thilk, Mildred Middleton, Betty Stimson, Millie Croop, and Verna Caulfield. Burt Jennings, Peggy Ward, and Millie Croop painted the inside ceilings of the ticket office and express rooms while standing on ten foot scaffolding, and some 20 or 30 families later pitched in to scrape and brush the outside of the depot to get it ready for painting.

How many remember that first cold winter when, without heat, dozens of men and women turned out every Saturday to remodel the freight room into what is now known as the Patterson Room, named after Wilson's long time station agent. The room was completely covered with flooring, siding, insulation, barn wood walls, and other improvements including heating equipment, electrical wiring, and fixtures. And was it Nettie Stimson who fell from a ten foot stepladder while helping Diane Albright, Peggy Ward, and Lois Barnum stipple the entire new ceiling?

Improvements were made because the society had many willing volunteers, like Art Schnoor, Elwin Upton, Ed Culverwell, Ralph Dinse, Whit Barnum, Burt Jennings, Don Croop, Elton Kropp, Howard Hunter, Doug and Darrell Smith, Bob Thomas, Wally Beutel, Fred Berry, Ed Allgeier, Fenton Cole, Archie Petty, Dick Schultz, Tom Sharpe, Rex Stacy, Mitchell Stevenson, Earl Swann, Ken Tracy, Karl Wright, Harold Albright, Merritt Case, Joe Higgins, Ed Lort, and David Weiler, who put in many extra hours to get the museum off to a good start.

Special projects included the placement of the 1903 Caboose, courtesy of "Red Clark", and its renovation by the late Burt Jennings and Bob Rose, and the erection of the operating windmill under the guidance of "Chuck" Messersmith.

1972-THE YEAR OF THE WILSON MUSEUM

Art Schnoor and other willing hands built the kitchenette, storage dock, tool shed, and "Schnoor Room", which was named for Art in appreciation for all he did. After Dr. Argue donated several antique cars, it we decided that a building should be erected to put them in. The project was given a boost when Dr. George and Rosemary Badger of Lockport, donated four and one half acres of land. The new structure was erected on the east side of the property they gave, but it was through the generosity of Ed Hastings that the building was completed.

A few years ago it was decided to build a large transportation building, an upon completion it was dedicated as the Dr. John Argue Memorial Building. The original car building was named the "Barnum Building" after Wilson's late supervisor, Whitney Barnum, which now contains a kitchen, banquet area, and built in exhibits like the old 'Wilson Post office", and "Country Store". A number of volunteers helped on this project including Ollie Clark, construction; John Myers, electrical wiring; and Jack Maxfield, painting.

Progress has also been made on the Fittro Shop. Under the chairmanship of Ed Allgeier, cement floors have been poured and the west end of the barn re-sided. Items are being collected for a blacksmith shop. It is quite likely that agricultural equipment will also be kept in the Barn.

Much has been accomplished, and much more will be, as younger members, with new ideas, become active and help continue the dream that was envisioned 25 years ago by a small group of founders.

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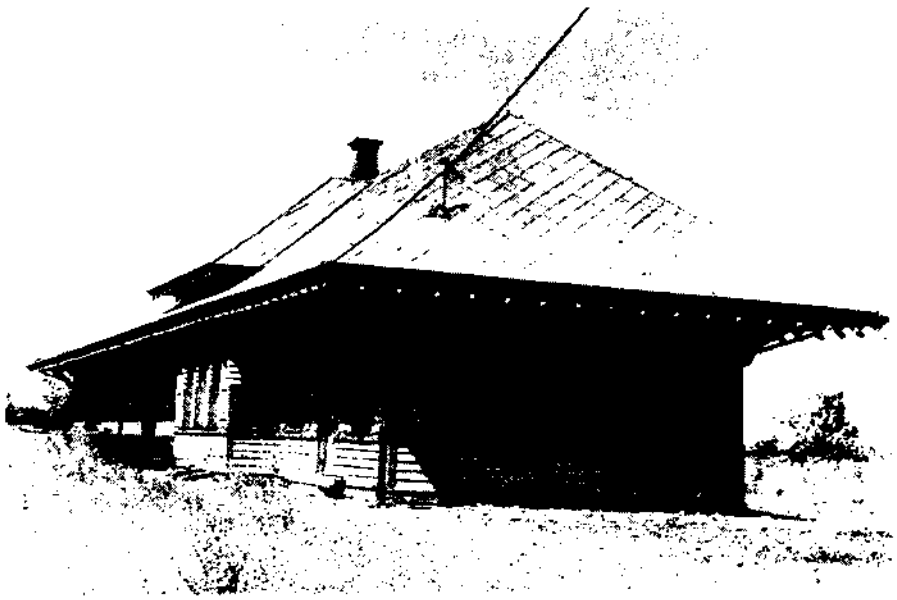

WILSON DEPOT IN 1972 WHEN ACQUIRED BY WILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GROWTH OF THE ANTIQUE CAR MUSEUM

The Wilson Historical Society, which was organized in 1972, received its early start and momentum because of the interest and support of its first President, the late Dr. John Argue of Wilson. In addition to his fascination with history, the doctor was an avid collector of antique, classic, and sports cars and, not too widely known, passed his test to be a motor car racing driver in May of 1974, at Mosburg, Ontario, Canada.

When he turned the 1912 Depot over to the Wilson Historical Society in 1972, several of his cars, trucks, and spare parts were stored there. Recognizing the society's need for more space, he cleaned out the freight room so the society could start renovating it into a meeting room and exhibit area.

In 1977, Dr. Argue gave the 1904 "Covert" which he had just acquired from the Ford Museum at Dearborn, Michigan to the Museum. This car had special meaning to the doctor as it had been built in his boyhood town of Lockport, New York. The "Covert" Runabout automobile was manufactured from 1904-07 by Byron F. Covert at his Richmond Avenue Plant in Lockport, and it was the first chainless car built in America. It had a De Deon-type, one cylinder gasoline engine with combination air and water cooling and it was able to develop 6 1/2 horsepower. The "Covert" is unique in that it is probably the last known car of its kind in the United States and possibly the world. It was once owned by the noted opera singer, James Melton, and was later exhibited at the Ford Museum from 1939 until 1977. The car was not exactly in mint condition when Dr. Argue acquired it since the two rear fenders were gone, the lamps were missing, and a Ford steering wheel had been substituted in place of the original. The tires were also in need of replacing. Under the new "Adopt-A-Car" plan, Don Burrows planned to prefabricate and replace the rear fender on "his" car.

While Mr. Covert was making his car in Lockport, the Niagara Automobile was also being built in Wilson by the Wilson Auto Manufacturing Company. Stanley Dwight was the owner and manager, and George Brooks and Joe Whiteside built the bodies and made the gears and clutches for the rear axles. The "Niagara " sold for $850--about $200 more than the Covert Chainless.

After the "Covert" was acquired, it was apparent that more cars would be donated, so plans were developed to erect a new cement block building to put them in. Since carrying insurance is pretty expensive, it was felt that a new fireproof building would negate the need to insure. In October, 1978, recommendations of the Planning Board were approved, and a 40x60 concrete building with a steel roof was started. Ed Hastings supervised the project and, thanks to him, the building was erected at a cost far less than projected. He not only arranged to get building materials at reduced cost, but also donated the time he spent constructing it. The new facility was quickly filled to capacity, and there was no longer any doubt that the antique cars would soon become one of the museum's main attractions.

GROWTH OF THE ANTIQUE CAR MUSEUM

It now seemed reasonable that if we were to continue accepting old cars, consideration of a new, larger building must be explored. in addition to the cars donated by Dr. Argue, cars were also given to the museum by Mrs. James Oldham; Nancy Kent; George Linnabery; Norman Thilk; Howard Kaiber; Harry Blanchette; Leo Klees; Harold Argue; Lynette Eldridge; Beatrice Mensch; Jean Argue; and Floyd Clark.

It was decided to go ahead with a building and with the help from about three dozen volunteers, funds raised by the society, and grants from the State of New York and the Town of Wilson, ground was again broken for a new, larger block building just north of the first one..

Unfortunately, Dr. Argue did not live to see the new building completed. He passed away on September 29, 1986, and was sadly missed when the new building was dedicated, in his memory, on October 11, 1987.

Today, the Dr. John F. Argue Memorial Building stands as a reminder of all he did to help build a remarkable museum complex in the Town of Wilson.

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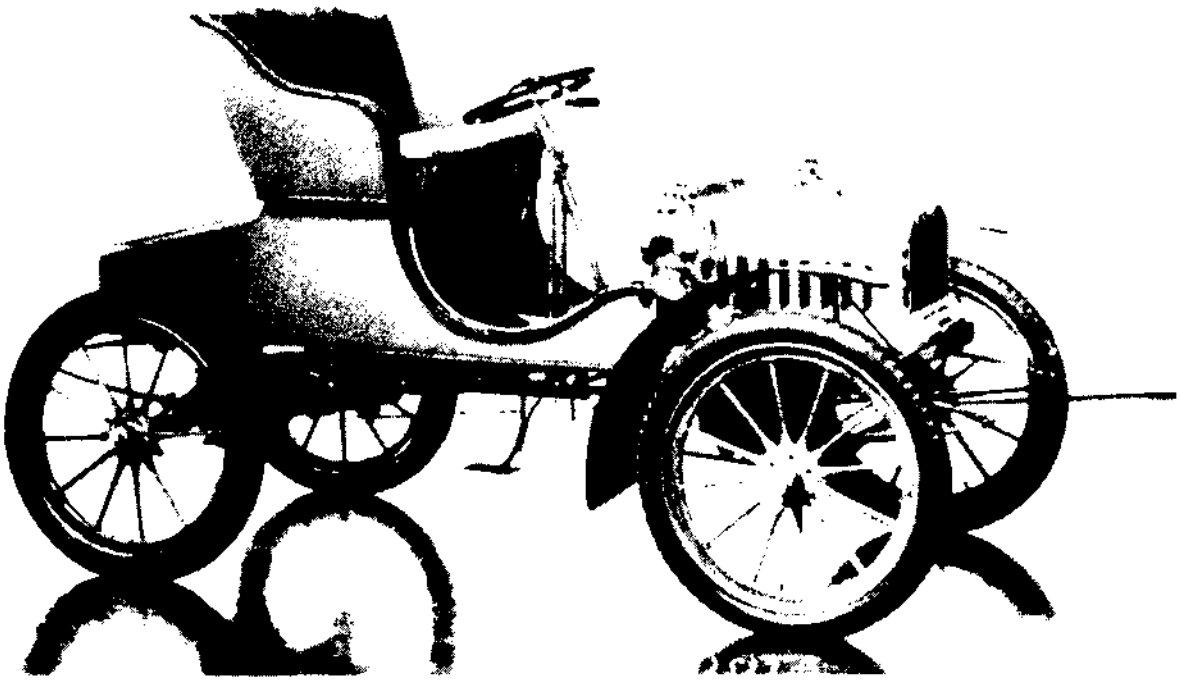

1904 COVERT CHAINLESS RUNABOUT MADE BY COVERT COMPANY, LOCKPORT, N.Y.

WILSON AND THE CIVIL WAR

In 1917, Levi G. Pettit, who served with the 8th New York Volunteer Heavy Artillery, prepared a list of the men who enlisted from Wilson during the Civil War, which included approximately 385 men. This number is believed to have been the most, per capita, of any small town in New York State.

Over 100 men enlisted in the First New York Light Artillery Battery M, in which, Chief Bugler, Lorenzo Pratt served with his captured confederate war horse, "Billy Sherman". After the war, Pratt returned to Wilson with his horse, and when Billy died, he was buried on the Pratt farm with military honors by members of Wilson's G.A.R. Post. Today the farm is the home of Ron and Judy Zauner, and Frank Massing keeps the site mowed and looking nice.

Several other units such as the 19th Independent Battery, the New York Heavy Artillery, and the 28th Infantry Regiment also had impressive enlistment records from Wilson, along with many other units in which small numbers of enlisted men served. One, for instance, was the 105th New York Volunteer Regiment, which was organized at Rochester and LeRoy in 1862, and saw action at Cedar Mountain, Rappahannock, Second Bull Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. The original muster roll filed in the County Clerk's Office lists three men in the regiment from Wilson, Julius Turner, Robert Lutze, and Charles Ashford. Another unit, the 12th New York Independent Battery, was organized in Albany and had a number of Niagara County men serving in it including two from Wilson--John Adriance and Arnold Harris. Some of the engagements in which the 12th fought were the Battle of Petersburg, Kelly's Ford, and Cold harbor.

The story about "Billy Sherman" was not the only one to come out of the war about local Wilson veterans, but perhaps the most unusual was one about William Adriance, who grew up on his family's farm on Beebe Road, Town of Wilson. Young Adriance enlisted in the 28th Infantry Regiment of New York Volunteers, and on May, 1862, he was captured near Winchester, Virginia. The 1851 .36 caliber Naval Colt revolver which he carried as a side arm, was taken from him, but on the handle of the pistol was engraved, "William Adriance, 3rd Sgt. Lockport, New York." Adriance never got his pistol back but, strange as it may seem, the weapon was found 100 years later by a Mr. Robert Stapleton on the bed of the Yaquina River in the State of Oregon. The inscription on the revolver was still legible, so Mr. Stapleton contacted the office of the Niagara County Historical Society to see if a relative could be found. The society was able to refer him to a grand niece of William Adriance, and the revolver was given to her. How could a pistol, which was taken from Adriance in Virginia, find its way to a river bed in Oregon?

It was during the war's final months that Lee's once great army of Northern Virginia was strung out in the trenches around Petersburg. At the same time, General Grant was sending out cavalry raids to destroy the enemy's military installations. Twenty nine men from Wilson served in the 2nd Mounted Rifles and took part in this action and destroyed several bridges and tore up railroad tracks to cut off supplies to Lee's army.

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BILLY SHERMAN, WAR HERO

The battles around Chattanooga, Tennessee, in November, 1863, ended with a Union victory that not only left the South's main rail center in northern hands, but also most of the fertile food producing lands of eastern Tennessee. Battery M, 1st Regiment New York Light Artillery, took an active part in the battles, and today one may see the name of Niagara's proud artillery company displayed on the New York Monument on top of "Lookout Mountain".

The battery was made up mostly of men from Niagara County, and according to records compiled by former Wilson Town Clerk, Arthur Dobbs, over 100 of the 262 men who volunteered to serve in Battery M during the war, came from the Town of Wilson. Among these was Chief Bugler, Pvt. Lorenzo Pratt, who was reported to have captured a Confederate military horse during the Chattanooga battle.

The horse, a Tennessee Walker, was a dark bay, 15 hands high, and his record as a military "Hero" was described in an 1889 edition of the Lockport Daily Journal under the heading, "Journal War Sketches" and we quote: "He was chosen as a saddle horse by Comrade Lorenzo Pratt at Chattanooga, just as we were entering on the "Atlantic Campaign." He bore well his part in all hardships and battles that culminated in the capture of Atlanta, and also was in the battles of Resica, Dallas, New Hope Church, Kulp's Farm, Peach Tree Creek, and the Siege of Atlanta." Pvt. Pratt named his horse "Billy Sherman" after General William T. Sherman who led the Union Army in the "March to the Sea". After the "Campaign of the Carolinas", Billy, bearing his master and his bugle, followed his illustrious namesake, General Sherman, to Washington where Battery M marched in the Grand Review.

The unit then returned to Rochester, New York, where it was mustered out on June 23, 1865, and Pvt. Pratt returned with Billy to his Wilson-Burt Road farm. The horse lived for another 25 years during which time he did light farm chores, but in his later years he was treated as a family pet. He often appeared in Wilson's annual Memorial Day parades, 4th of July celebrations, and G.A.R. encampments. He was always a great attraction, and children especially liked to climb on his back to have their pictures taken. It was said that old Billy made a very smart appearance in his military trappings, and when a bugle was sounded, he would prance about as though anticipating a charge into battle.

Old Billy died in 1887 at the age of 32 years. Since he was held in high esteem by members of Battery M who belonged to Wilson's Peter A. Porter Post, G.A.R., a grave was dug on the west side of the Pratt farm where Billy was given a final military salute. He was lowered into his last resting place by surviving members of the G.A.R. with an army blanket over his body and an American Flag draped over his head.

An interesting exhibit in the Wilson Museum is a preserved hoof removed from Billy Sherman.

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BILLY SHERMAN, WAR HERO

For many years, when members of the G.A.R. placed flags on the graves of their departed comrades in Greenwood Cemetery, a flag was also placed on Billy's grave. But as the years went by, those who had fought beside the old Confederate War Horse, also passed away. When Billy had been buried, however, someone had planted iris on his grave, and each year, although unattended, the flowers continued to bloom each spring. Because of this, the Wilson Historical Society was able to locate the grave site, and made plans to place a marker at the site.

On September 1, 1973, just 86 years to the day after Billy died, a dedication service was held, and as Jackie Luff Bryer, great great granddaughter of Lorenzo Pratt unveiled the marker, Randy Schultz sounded taps while members of the North-South Skirmish Association fired a salute with their cannon. Taking part in the impressive ceremony were Congressman Henry P. Smith III; Dr. John F. Argue, President of the Historical Society; Paul Hewitt, Chairman Niagara County Legislators; Whitney Barnum, Town Supervisor; Harold Mosher, Village Mayor; and James Buncy, State Regional Commander of the North-South Skirmish Association.

Wilson is probably the only town in "Yankee Land" to have a memorial to a Confederate military horse, and the intriguing story has not only been written in many area papers, but was also given wide publicity in the Chattanooga Free Press

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CONFEDERATE WAR HORSE, BILLY SHERMAN, BURIED IN WILSON, N. Y.

CIVIL WAR ODDITIES

During the Civil War, "war volunteers" made up most of the combat forces in both the Northern and Southern armies, and before the war started most communities like Wilson had their local militia units. Wilson's Militia drilled at Camp Cuyler on "Sunset Island", so many of the young men in the area had some military training when the war started. Luther Wilson was Captain of Company L, one of five companies that made up the 66th Militia Regiment, however, when the war began, the 66th did not enter the conflict as a Unit, but most of its young men volunteered for service in other Niagara County regiments.

Daniel H. Davis, who enlisted in the 28th New York Infantry Regiment was the first soldier from Wilson to die in combat, and he is buried in Greenwood Cemetery. Wilson is also noted for having lost one of the last soldiers killed in the war, namely, Joshua Smith, who lost his life while in action with the 2nd Mounted Rifles near Petersburg on April 9, 1865.

Wilson's G.A.R. Post was named after Peter A. Porter, who commanded the 8th New York Heavy Artillery. The 8th was organized when President Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 men to help break the Union's stalled offensive at Richmond, Virginia. Over 50 Wilson men were mustered in at the Niagara County Fairgrounds on August 22, 1862. When the regiment first arrived in Washington, everyone was in high spirits, and the untested troops from the Niagara region were referred to as "Porter's Life Insurance Company." Later, because of their heavy casualties, the regiment became known as the "Hard Luck" outfit, or the "Bloody Eighth". At Cold Harbor the 8th engaged in two days of furious fighting, and Colonel Porter along with 630 officers and men lost their lives.

Sometimes when men volunteered for service in the army, they found things a little changed when they came home. Enoch Pettit was a good example. When his wife died he was heartbroken and discouraged, so he enlisted and went to war with the 49'ers. Prior to his enlistment, he bought and sold cattle and had considerable lands and buildings. While in the army he lost touch with Wilson and when his taxes were not paid, his lands were taken over by others. After the war he returned home and lived with a daughter until he died and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery. Enoch served in a musician company, and the sword and dagger that he carried while on duty are on display in the Wilson Museum.

Although the Union Army was made up mostly by volunteers, the government did draft some recruits, and the first man to be drafted from Wilson was Hugh Gleason who served in Company A of the 140th New York Volunteer Regiment. Gleason was also the first substitute soldier from East Wilson. Any man could be a substitute soldier after Congress passed a law making it possible for a drafted person to hire a substitute to serve in his place.

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WILSON'S MASONIC LODGES

The Masonic Brotherhood is the oldest and largest fraternal organization in the world, and in the United States alone, has 3 million members in 14,000 Lodges. Although the Ontario Lodge # 376 of Wilson was organized in 1855, we find that Masons existed in the Town of Wilson as early as 1824.

When the Wilson Township was organized in 1818, its boundaries extended east to the Transit Line on the outskirts of Olcott, (then known as Kempville). The hamlet was named in honor of Col. Burgoyn Kemp, an early settler.

In 1822, a petition, endorsed by Niagara Lodge # 345, was sent to the Grand lodge requesting the formation of Niagara Felicity Lodge but, due to delays, the charter was not granted until 1824. At that time it was entered on the Grand Lodge records as "Niagara Felicity Lodge", Kempville, Town of Wilson, Niagara County, New York. The officers of this first lodge in the Town of Wilson were, Caleb Earl, Worshipful Master; John Eddy, Senior Warden; James Wilson, Junior Warden; and Reuben Wilson, Treasurer. The Lodge prospered until 1827, but after the Morgan Incident, attendance dropped off and by 1832 meetings were discontinued.

In February, 1855, Ontario Lodge # 376 was organized in Wilson and, endorsed by Lockport Lodge # 73, and many of the former members of Felicity Lodge actively engaged. George Moot, Worshipful Master, served nine different terms. Other charter members were R. L. McChesney; S. Merwin; T. Lyons; G. B. Wilson; S. Hosmer; and Reuben Wilson. Meetings were held in a three-story brick building at the corner of Young and Catherine Streets. Ten years later, in 1866, the lodge was able to purchase the building. The place was badly in need of repair and to accommodate a large turnout of members, it was necessary to shore-up the upper floors. Also, the building settled so badly the doors on the second floor were often hard to open.

In 1890, the building was destroyed in the big "Masonic Block" fire, and meetings were held temporally in the home of Worshipful Master, Harvey Sanford. Plans to rebuild on the same site got under way immediately, and on January 1, 1891, the first meeting was held in the new hall. Wilson's familiar landmark had a kitchen and dining room added on the north side of the building in 1920, and Ontario Lodge continues to meet in their lodge to the present day.

In May, 1992, Sumner Stacy of Mineola, Texas and Lawrence Pease of Wilson, received their 50 year membership pins, and other long-time living members of the lodge include Ora Pettit of Wilson and Rex Stacy of Spring, Texas.

Many prominent men from Wilson served as Worshipful Masters of the Masonic Lodge and they included Faye Campbell; Milford Campbell; Donald Eick; Jack Maxfield; Ronald Martin; Wes Johnson; Marvin Myers; Donald Sinclair; Donald Sinclair, Jr.; Wallace Goodman; William Socha; Daniel King; Charles Landry; Kenneth Fuller; Jack Mercer; and Scott Gabbey.

WILSON'S MASONIC LODGES

Rev. Ardell Gould and the late Rev. Rae Brothers, former pastors of Exley United Methodist Church, both served as New York State Grand Chaplains.

Many Wilson men who played an important part in the development and history of Wilson, are listed among the Worshipful Masters of Ontario Lodge # 376. Some of these include Luther Wilson, a leader in shipbuilding and wholesale shipping; Charles Tugwell, owner of the Fredonia Canning Company; Dr. John Burns, a Wilson and Niagara County doctor for over 50 years; Charles D. Tabor, well know Fruit Farmer; Thomas and Edward Marks, Mark's Nurseries; Lawrence Pease, Town Councilman and Apple Grower; Ora Pettit, owner and operator of Pettit's Electric Shop; Rex Stacy, Fuel and Feeds; Stanley Borngraeber, "King of Spuds"; Robert Gabbey, Fruit and Poultry; Glenn Leetch, owner of the former Wilson Dairy; Ronald Gifford, Harrison Radiator Executive; Russell D. Sage, prominent Burt farmer; Al Burrows, Fruit Farmer; and Sam McCoy, Harrison Radiator engineer.

The Wilson Masonic Lodge, is nearly as old as the community in which it has served. In 1993, we celebrated Wilson's 175th anniversary, with a salute to the Masons of Wilson who have been active in the growth and development of the Town for nearly 170 years.

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FIRST MASONIC LODGE IN TOWN OF WILSON ORGANIZED IN 1824

LIONS PROMOTE WILSON COMMUNITY

The year 1941 was the era for two memorable events--America's entry into World Ward II, and the formation of the Wilson Lions Club. Although the war was brought to a favorable conclusion in 1945, the Lions Club is still going strong after 57 years. The Lockport Lions sponsored the Wilson Club, and in November, 1941, over two hundred Lions from surrounding areas gathered in the Wilson High School auditorium for a charter presentation ceremony.

Following dinner, Chairman, James C. Cornell called the meeting to order and introduced Mr. Earl W. Brydges, President, who accepted the club's charter from Dr. Neff of Niagara Falls, New York. The names inscribed on the new charter were: Dr. John F. Argue, Dr. George W. Badger, A. W. Blemaster, Virgil B. Bowersox, Stanley W. Borngraeber, Willard H. Broderick, Earl W. Brydges, Wesley A. Churchill, James C. Cornell, Harold F. Davis, Bernard E. Connors, Howard S. Kayner, Ronald P. Swick, Kermit Liddel, Rev. Edward Franklin, John A. Myers, Frank E. Radigan, Maitland P. Smith, Rex. E. Stacy, Francis A. Tate, Norman J. Thilk, and John H. Wilson.

Since it was organized, the Lions Club has been foremost in the promotion of many worthwhile projects in Wilson. Perhaps the most noteworthy has been their support of the Buffalo Eye Bank Research Society. The society was founded by the Lions Club of Western New York, and not only provides cornea service for the blind, but also helps underwrite the cost of eye glasses for the needy.

The Wilson Lions have also supported many other community activities such as the "Little League", the All Sports Booster Club, the Wilson Free Library, the Wilson Golden Agers, the Wilson Historical Society, and the Wilson Boy and Girl Scouts. Other activities in which they have been involved have included cleaning and repairing headstones in Greenwood Cemetery, Niagara County "Big Brothers and Big Sisters" program, and promoting Halloween parties for youngsters at the Wilson Fire Hall.

In addition to monies received from personal donations, the Lions have participated in a number of activities to raise money for a variety of programs. Outstanding among these have been "sell-out" performances by local talent in such musical shows such as the "King and I", "Music Man", "Bye Bye Birdie", and Fiddler on the Roof."

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Wilson Historical Society, Kevin Cornell and other representatives of the Lions Club attended and donated several valuable artifacts for display in the Wilson Museum. Included was the first framed Charter of the Club presented in 1941; the first original Wilson Lions Club Banner; and two Brass Bells on which the names of Past Presidents are engraved. According to Mr. Cornell, the items were believed to have been lost in the disastrous Hub Hotel fire in 1980, but were instead saved by several members. The decision was then made to give the items to the museum where they would be safe and put on display.

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FIREMEN FIELD DAYS

The Fireman Field Day held in Wilson on August 25-26, 1995 reminded us that the Wilson Volunteers have been holding field days for over 72 years. The Company was formally organized on September 17, 1923, and the fledgling organization started with Ernest Horton as the First President. Meetings were held above Horton's Hardware Store or Biggins's Blacksmith Shop, and later in the small cobblestone building that once served as Luther Wilson's office.

The new company was pretty hard-up for funds, and the first fire equipment was a pair of hose carts borrowed from the Newfane Fire Company. In order to raise funds, the volunteers held a number of money-making events, the first being a balloon dance in the old Middleton Hall on Young Street. Interest in the dance was kindled by launching balloons into the air--some with dollar bills attached, and anyone finding one was given free admission to the dance.

The fire company's first fire truck was purchased March 14, 1925--a LaFrance Pumper. it is still in good running condition and is often referred to as "Old Betsy". The late Bill Scheffler was one of its first drivers. Some of the first volunteer firemen signed notes to raise the $12,000 needed to purchase the truck. Prices were comparatively lower in the early 1920's when a fireman's uniform, for instance, cost as little as $2.50 for hat, trousers, and shirt.

Charter members of the company were Ernest Horton, Charles Crawford, James Wilson, Lee Ward, Bill Lashner, Merle Wilson, Roy DeNeau, Harry Holden, Henry Stockwell, Herman Smith, and Harry Biggins.

The first annual Field Day was held August 30, 1924, and it featured many activities such as "Free-for-All" horse and pony races with $20 cash prizes for winners. A parade was held at 1:00 PM, and many other field day events followed including running races, tug-of-wars, three legged races, honeymoon races and sack races. There were also penny scrambles for the kids, peanut races, and quoit-pitching contests.

The popular old field days of yesteryear have disappeared and been replaced by other attractions such as Carnival Rides, however, a few of the popular old favorites like Chicken Chowder, Homemade Foods, and Bingo have been retained by the fireman.

In 1995, the Field Day was held on Friday and Saturday, and a 5K Run and Midway were featured on Friday. Saturdays' events included Chicken Chowder, Flea Market and a huge Firemen's Parade at 5:00 PM. It lasted almost two hours and featured many fire companies, musical groups, floats, and old cars. The Historical Society entree in the parade was the late Dr. John Argue's 1934 Pierce Arrow with which he won four National Championships. Don Burrows drove the car while Don Croop watched the temperature gauge. Sara Berry and Zilpha Petty, charter members of the society, rode in the back seat.

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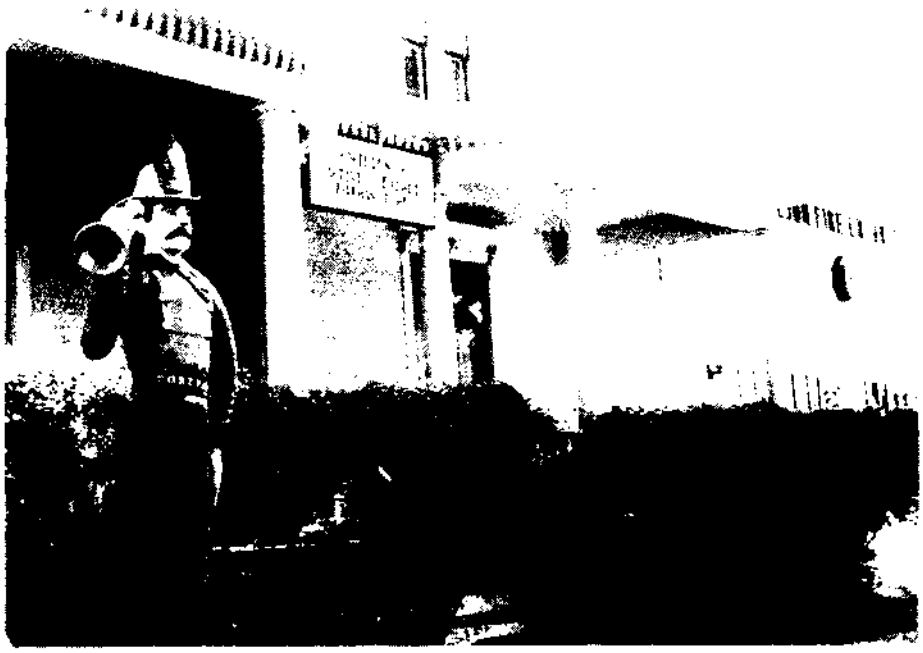
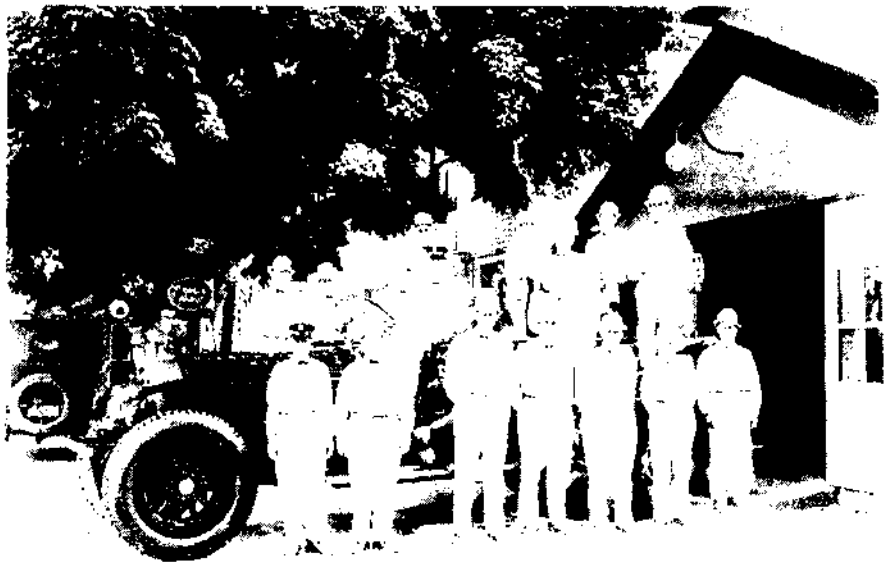
FIREMEN FIELD DAYS



WILSON ACTIVE AND EXEMPT FIREMEN'S HOME CA. 1940

EARLY FIELD DAYS BUILT FIRE COMPANY



FIREMAN WITH "OLD BETSY" IN THE LATE 1920'S

EARLY FIELD DAYS BUILT FIRE COMPANY

Considering the number of bad fires that occurred in Wilson at the turn of the century, it is surprising that a fire company was not started sooner than it was, yet after the Masonic Block fire of 1890, a proposition to organize a fire company was presented twice to the voters, and twice was voted down.

On July 10, 1894, the historic old Ontario Hotel burned, taking the frame Presbyterian Church with it, and on June 6, 1896, the pretentious Tower House was also consumed by flames. Other fires leveled the Baptist Church, the R.W.&O. Depot, and Steven's Fruit Warehouse. In 1899, Hackett's Grocery and the Honeywell residence burned, and two years later, the north side of Young Street was destroyed, with one or two exceptions. In 1913, when the Sutherland Hotel burned, there was still no fire company in Wilson.

In 1923, public apathy turned to action, and the First Volunteer Company in Wilson was organized. The company was as poor as the proverbial "church mouse". In order to raise money for new equipment, the Fire Company held its First Annual Field Day on August 30, 1924.

A parade was held at 1:00 PM featuring six fire companies, six bands, and a large number of civic and church floats. The volunteers were proud of their new company so the line of march started at the north end of Lake Street, proceeded to the railroad depot, then counter marched back to Young Street where it headed west and disbanded at Youngstown Road.

All kinds of events were planned during the day including a tug-of-war between the long-haired ladies and those with bobbed hair. Trouble was, they could not find enough ladies with long hair to compete, so a balloon race was held instead. Boxes of candy were given to the ladies and gents who competed in the three-legged races, and boxes of cigars were awarded to the fire companies with men strong enough to win the inter-company tug-of-war contests. A pie-eating contest was timed for speed--not endurance, because the firemen were afraid they could not find enough pies for a long contest. Other activities included a penny scramble for the children, but the high light of the day was a greased pig scramble with the pig awarded as the prize.

It was truly an old fashioned field day picnic in which the entire community took part, and even the churches joined together to provide food at a single church stand. Afternoon and evening concerts were provided by the Ontario Band, and an outdoor dance from seven until midnight rounded out the many events of the day.

The volunteers of the 1920's got their new fire company off to a good start, and any former members who are still around may well be proud of the present fire company which grew out of their efforts nearly 75 years ago.

Today, Wilson's Volunteer Fire Company #1 serves many areas of the community with their well trained fire police; water rescue/scuba diver team; and a medical service team that was first in Niagara County to provide Advanced Life Support to all local residents.

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VETERANS ORGANIZED AMERICAN LEGION

On December 31, 1919, a charter application was sent to the Department of New York, American Legion, and on February 3, 1920, a charter was issued for Wilson's Martin F. Jennings American Legion Post #836. Charter members of the newly organized Post were: Harold Warden, F. Clare Coe, Ralph H. Biggins, Harry L. Biggins, Harold L. Teague, Roy E. DeNeau, Herman W. Smith, Ralph K. Giles, Morton H. McClellan, Stanley F. Giles, Carl F. Abel, Albert W. Johnson, Eugene W. Erhart, Leslie F. Marks, and Hyman Einstein.

Past Commanders of the Post, which now numbers nearly 35 members, were Edward Allgeier, Don Luff, Don Kerwin, and Floyd "Red" Clark. In the 1990's the Post Commander was John Demmin and other officers includes Howard Hunter, Adjutant, Wendell Strubing, Gerald Smith, Randall Galgen, and Jack Linnenbank. Other prominent members of the community who belonged to Martin F. Jennings Post #836 were Mayor Robert Horton, Supervisor, Harold Mosher, Sony Stapf, Norm Sherrie, Bill Scheffler, and Gordon Hausman.

The local Post has conducted Memorial Day services for veterans at Greenwood Cemetery for many years, and in later years a second service was conducted around noon at the Veteran's Memorial Marker on the museum grounds. The Legion also places American Flags on the graves of the men and women who served their country in the armed forces.

The American Legion was born at a caucus of 1,000 members of the American Expeditionary Forces of World War I at Paris, France, on March 15-17, 1919. The Legion is a patriotic, non-political, non-military organization, and was incorporated by an Act of Congress on September 16, 1919. The organization first included veterans from World War I, World War II, and Korea, but later, both men and women who served honorably in Vietnam, Granada, Beirut, Lebanon, and the Gulf War, became eligible for membership.

Some noteworthy activities engaged in nationally by the American Legion include sponsorship of candidates for Boy's & Girl's State; Loan Closet to loan hospital equipment to those in need; building athletic fields for Little League baseball, girl's softball and soccer league teams; providing meeting places for Senior Citizens; and making donations and volunteering time to disabled veterans in Veterans Hospitals.

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"YANKEE DOODLE FITCH"

During the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration, many intereresting stories were published about the American Revolution including the one about how the patriotic song, "Yankee Doodle" originated. The song gains added significance to Wilson with the documented information showing that Gary Fitch of Olcott had an ancestor, Col. Thomas Fitch of Norwalk, Connecticut, who was given the sobriquet "Yankee Doodle", while leading American troops during the French and Indian Wars.

In Rev. Sellek's history of Norwalk, he states that Col. Thomas Fitch "figured prominently in the French and Indian Wars from 1754 to 1763, and led his troops in the battle of Crown Point".

In 1755, Col. Fitch commanded a regiment of American Troops that joined a detachment of British regulars on an expedition to Ticonderoga. On the way they marched into Greenbush, New York (now Rensselaer) with Col. Fitch at the head of his raw looking, ragged troops, causing a "witty" Englishman to exclaim, "So that's your Yankee Doodle"....and the nickname was immediately attached to Col. Fitch.

At this same time, Dr. Richard Schuckburgh, a surgeon with the British army, was so impressed by the uncouth appearance of the provincial soldiers, he composed a song which he called, "Yankee Doodle". He turned the song over to the motley array of American soldiers who adopted it as good marching music. Later, during the Revolution, the Continental troops adopted it as their favorite marching song, and were proud to refer to themselves as "Yankees".

Descendants of Col. Fitch settled in Wilson in 1829 when Enoch Fitch, Sr. purchased 100 acres of land near what would later be the Fitch Road. Fruit growing has since become synonymous with the Fitch name and in 1980, the family celebrated their 150th anniversary of growing apples in Niagara County. Gary Fitch, who served as a trustee and First Vice President of the Wilson Historical Society, was elected President in 1998.

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MIKE RADIGAN'S BIKE

Many people who visit the Wilson Museum appear to be intrigued by an old bicycle with attached frame that is displayed with the antique cars in the John Argue Memorial Building. Today, people think nothing of hopping in their cars an driving twenty-five or thirty miles to shop, or eat out at their favorite restaurant. A generation ago it was not that way, which makes one realize how much the world has changed in one lifetime.

When the old Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg Railroad came through Wilson in 1876, it started an era when the "iron horse" would become the principal means of transportation for people traveling from one city to another. However, trains ran on schedules, and one might not be available when you needed it. That was the situation faced by Mike Radigan of Lockport.

In 1906, Mike decided to buy an interest in the Wilson Lumber Company which, at the time, was owned by five Wilson residents, Dwight, Bigalow, Singer, Mudge, and Tugwell. Naturally he wanted to look the yard over before making a purchase, so he and his 12 year old son, Frank, took the trolley to Burt, then walked the rest of the way to Wilson along the railroad tracks. Alanson Bigalow was the first person to sell his interest to Mike and , when he did, the lumber yard consisted of a carpenter shop and one small shed containing a few bundles of shingles and some cedar posts. He proceeded to buy out the other partners, then set about trying to figure out an easier way to get to Wilson each day.

He hit upon the idea of attaching a frame to his bicycle which he built so it could be operated on the rails between Burt and Wilson. Three iron rods were clamped to the bike so the handle bars and front wheel were held rigid. The bike's tires rode on one rail, and a small guide wheel attached to the opposite end of the frame, rode along the other rail. All Mike had to do was to get on and peddle--although he had to keep his eyes open for trains. The trip was smooth and fast, and he reached his destination much sooner than if he had followed the highways between the two communities.

He made arrangements with Martin Sheehan, Superintendent of the Lockport Division of the International Railway to store his "railbike" in a shed by the Burt Station each night, so when he arrived in Burt in the morning, his "transportation" was waiting for him. Mr. Sheehan did caution him, however, to get his contraption off the rails quickly if he saw a train approaching , so he would not be reported to Divisional Headquarters in Rochester.

In 1914, Mike bought a Buick touring sedan for $1200, and began driving back and forth from Lockport to Wilson each day accompanied by his old police dog, "Fritz". Since he no longer had use for his "rail-bike", he hung it in his garage on Grant Street in Lockport, where it remained for about seventy years.

Mike made good use of his rail-bike for 12 years, and operated the Wilson Lumber Company until 1934 when his son, Frank took over the business.

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GOLD FEVER

Old letters sometimes reveal interesting stories about former residents and how their lives were changed by historic events. One that we were privileged to read described the adventures of George Swick, a young Wilson man, who decided to "Go West" during the Oregon gold rush of the 1860's.

George grew up on the family farm located at the corner of Chestnut and Townline Roads-- known for many years as the William Rohring farm. When the Civil War Broke out he was 22 years old , and he volunteered to serve in Company B of the 28th New York Infantry Regiment. The 28th was one the the most embattled regiments in the war. It was reported that, when the regiment left New York in 1861, it had a complement of 798 men, but when it was mustered out two years later, only 418 remained. George was one of the lucky ones who made it back home to Wilson, and about a year later he met and married Martha Rodgers.

It was about this time that gold was discovered in Oregon, and one of George's neighbors got the "gold fever" and sold young Swick on the idea of going west to make a fortune. Martha didn't like the idea, and decided to stay home. George and his friend stocked up on provisions and purchased a covered wagon and three saddle horses. When they loaded their wagon it was noted that, their supplies included 10 gallons of whiskey, 5 gallons of gin, and 5 gallons of wine.

They left Lockport on their western trek the same year that President Lincoln was assassinated. The journey took them three months to cross fourteen states to their destination.

The route that they followed was known as the "Overland Stage Route", Although they saw several Indian tribes, all appeared to be friendly and they had no trouble with them. When they were crossing the Mississippi on a horse boat, they got tangled up with a large floating tree which carried their boat, horses, and wagon downstream. It nearly proved to be a disaster, but they finally managed to get back to shore and on the trail again. When they finally reached Oregon, they decided to settle on the Snake River where they were able to buy a cabin for $30 and immediately set about panning for gold.

At that time, gold was used as the medium of exchange, and since most westerners considered paper money worthless, you needed gold if you wished to purchase anything. The finished product looked like yellow sand, and was worth about $20 an ounce.

George spent two years in Oregon, but since his wife had not gone with him, he decided to return to Wilson. The journey home was nearly as rough as when he had gone west. It was a 160 mile drive by stagecoach to the Columbia River and there he boarded a boat for Portland, Oregon, where he caught a steamer to San Francisco. There he was able to board another boat headed for Panama .

The Panama Canal had not been built, so George and his party had to cross the Isthmus by mule train. On the Gulf side he boarded a boat for the Atlantic Coast, but his boat was nearly sunk off the Carolina Coast when they ran into a bad storm. George made it to shore and was able to catch a train back to Wilson.

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TUGWELL, PROMINENT WILSONIAN

When Mr. and Mrs. Charles Tugwell moved from Sinclairville to Wilson ca. 1904, they couldn't have possibly known that their son, Rex, would someday be Assistant Secretary of Agriculture and a close advisor to the President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

People who knew Rex when he was a boy remembered him as being friendly, democratic, and very kind-hearted. He was an avid reader and quite fond of Dickens and the writings of Thomas Hardy. He also like to write poetry. After he left Wilson to attend Masten Park High School in Buffalo, he became the class poet.

He was a normal boy in all respects and quite studious, He enjoyed the ordinary pursuits and desires of other boys his age. Although never outstanding in sports, he was active and enjoyed playing games. It was said that he enjoyed boxing, but was known generally to be on the losing end. Rex did like to swim and go boating, but never had much interest in hunting or fishing.

Since his parents were well to do, he was able to enjoy the many advantages they were able to provide for him. After he left home, he still spent the summers at his folk's home on an island in Tuscarora Bay. Once known as Tugwell's Island, it is now the site of the Clark Marina.

During his college years, he spent a lot of time building a small log cabin near his parent's home which provided a quiet place for him to study and write. Prior to receiving his Doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, he married Florence Arnold, and they had two children. Dr. Tugwell became a Professor at Columbia University where he taught economics, and while in that position was named Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. The President appointed him to try and help solve the many agricultural problems facing the nation in the 1930's.

Before 1938, the American consumer was at the mercy of the unrestricted use of chemicals by farmers who grew fruit and vegetables. Apples were being sprayed with arsenic-laced pesticides; raw milk was being processed from tubercular cows; eye-liners containing corrosives were causing blindness to women; and it was reported that one brand of toothpaste was so strong, "a German army officer committed suicide by eating a tubeful".

In 1937 a drug was put on the market that hadn't been safety-tested, and proved to be poisonous. One hundred seven people died, mostly children, before the source of the poison was found. It was in this climate of "public outrage", that Dr. Tugwell authored the Pure Foods Bill which provided regulations and restrictions on the sale and advertising of drugs and cosmetics--an act which generated many protests from the drug and cosmetic companies.

Dr. Tugwell may have been way ahead of his time on conservation and environmental matters. In 1935 he urged support for the Federal Forest Service and other land conservation projects. He felt that our trees, grass, and water supplies must be conserved or the time would come when the Midwestern section of the country would become a vast desert.

TUGWELL, PROMINENT WILSONIAN

It is interesting to note that nearly sixty years ago, Dr. Tugwell predicted that "Cutthroat international trade would be eliminated." In his view he believed that "Somewhere between international anarchy, which we call free trade, and protectionist nationalism....we shall find a way to build a more substantial structure of exchange."

Dr. Tugwell, in spite of his many works for the public good, seemed to have a knack for rousing the ire of some organizations. For instance, in a speech before the Democratic women in Washington, DC, he once said, "American women should follow the example of Mrs. Roosevelt and serve wine in their homes." The response was instantaneous--especially among church groups, with one congregation demanding that if his remarks were true, he should be asked to resign immediately. The Doctor explained that his plea was for temperance, and that he was only urging women to use their influence to bring the country away from hard liquors, and use light wines and beers instead.

Dr. Rexford Guy Tugwell was 88 years old when he passed away in 1979 at Santa Barbara, California. Internment was in Evergreen Cemetery at Sinclairville, New York, home of his parents before they moved to Wilson, New York in 1904.

(Reference material for above item received from Don Loker, History Specialist at the Niagara Falls Public Library.)

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WILSON STATE BANK ORGANIZED BY CHARLES TUGWELL IN 1913

BRYDGES COMMEMORATION

The memory of the late Senator Earl Brydges, former Wilsonian, was honored when a rare antique table was donated to the Wilson Museum at the request of his late wife, Eleanor Mahoney Brydges, of Niagara Falls, New York. The table was a retirement gift to Senator Brydges from former Governor Nelson D. Rockefeller of New York, a close friend of the Senate Majority Leader. It was delivered to Mr. Brydges on his birthday in 1972 at his Parkway Apartments home in Niagara Falls. Of special significance is the fact that the old table was originally given to President William Henry Harrison in 1841, by the citizens of Erie County.

When Earl Brydges and his family moved to Wilson from Niagara Falls in 1940, he probably had no idea that he would some day become one of the most powerful political leaders in New York State. To Earl and Eleanor, Wilson would be a fine rural community in which to ultimately raise five sons and two daughters.

Once established in their beautiful, comfortable home on Lake Street, both Earl and Eleanor became active in community affairs. He served on the Wilson School Board for many years and, in 1941, helped organize the Wilson Lions Club and became its first president. Eleanor became interested in Girl Scouts, and for several years served as troop committee chairman of Brownie Troop #35 of Wilson. Later, she was a committeewoman for Intermediate Girl Scout Troop #1 which was led by Millie Croop.

Earl became interested in politics in the late 1940's and entered the Republican primary for State Senator on March 15, 1948, at a "kick-off" dinner held in the old Hub Hotel on Young Street, in the Village. His first run for office in the November election was a close race, and Mr. Brydges beat his Democratic opponent by only a few hundred votes. In following elections, however, he became one of the biggest vote-getters in Niagara County.

Earl always enjoyed a good story, even when it was on him, and it was said that he liked to tell about the time he missed a train connection at Newburg, New York, while on an early election speaking tour. A hotel clerk forgot to call and awaken him in time to catch an early morning train, so the Central office was called to see if the train could be stopped at Beacon, New York, to allow him to board it. The request was honored, and when he got on the train he was really given the "red carpet" treatment. Later, much to his surprise, he learned that the only reason the train had stopped at Beacon was because they mistook Senator Brydges for United States Senator, Styles Bridges of the Sate of New Hampshire.

The Brydges loved the small lakeshore village of Wilson where their seven children grew up and on January 24, 1971, friends and supporters attended a farewell reception at Our Lady of the Rosary RC Church. in Wilson. He had served in the New York State Legislature from 1948 to 1973. In 1965 he was Minority Leader of the Senate, and from 1966 to 1973, Majority Leader.

Senator Earl Brydges passed away on Easter Sunday, 1975, but the impact he had on his community and state will long be remembered.

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BRYDGES COMMEMORATION

SEN. EARL W. BRYDGES
MAJORITY LEADER
N Y STATE SENATE
ALBANY 1966 - 1973

"APPLESEED SAL"

Many people have read or heard the story about "Appleseed John", but only a few know that Wilson had its "Appleseed Sal".

The story dates back to 1818 when Daniel Holmes and his wife, Sally, came to Wilson from Saratoga, County, New York, and made their home on a 160 acre piece of land on lot #63 along East Lake Road. They brought their personal effects on a sled, while driving two cows and a team of oxen before them.

"Sal" carried a handful of apple seeds in her apron pocket that she had obtained from her father's apple orchard in Saratoga, and after they were settled, the seeds were planted behind their new home. The trees flourished, and some of them lived for 155 years until, in 1974, the last ones were blown over in a bad wind storm. At that time, the Holmes farm was the home of the late Floyd Salisbury, and he offered a few limbs to the Wilson Historical Society because of their age and historic interest.

Art Schnoor cut the limbs into half inch plaques which were used to make decoupages describing the Holmes story. They were sold at the 1975 "Old Fashioned Fair", and one piece was kept for display in the museum.

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THE "BOATHOUSE" WILSONS

One can hardly think of Wilson without bring into mind the "Boathouse Wilsons", Timothy, Floyd, Walter, Emerson, Billie, Fred and Merle. The boathouse we know today as the Boathouse Restaurant, was started ca. 1907 by Timothy Wilson. He and his wife, Flora Hurlburt, had eight children, but it was Floyd, Walter, and Emerson who followed in their fathers footsteps and operated the boathouse. Timothy's brother, Billie Wilson, had two sons, Fred and Merle, and the boathouse operated by them was just north of the other one.

Merle and Walter were probably best known for their friendship with young people, and many of the children who grew up then, may recall the trips they took out on the lake to gather in the fishing nets. One summer, Merle loaded about 30 young brownies from Troop #35 into the "Docksetter" and took them on a cruise to Olcott and back. The sides of the 28 foot boat were so high, many of the Brownies could not see over them--even when standing up. However, it was a nice warm sunny day so they curled up on the bottom of the boat and slept as it cruised over the smooth lake waters.

Young people liked to listen to Merle tell stories about the lake and harbor, and one time in 1962, a history project, 4th grader Timmy Schmidle, interviewed Merle and wrote down some interesting facts told to him about the harbor area.

"In 1895, many ships brought lumber to Wilson from Canada, and there was a "lumber lock" in front of Merle's boathouse. A lumber mill operated on the hill where the late Walter Wilson's cottage stands today."

"Around 1900, boats brought school kids with their lunches from Canada to visit the old Lake Island Park, and there was a pontoon bridge across the bay so they could walk over to the "island". The Sunset Beach Colony started on the island in 1875, and the first cottage was built by a Mr. Orvis of Toronto ."

"Merle and his father started the boat livery service in 1910, and the Wilson family fished commercially for over 62 years."

Walter Wilson, co-owner of the boathouse, spent most of his life as a commercial fisherman, and also operated the "Docksetter" Ferry Service to Sunset Island. His hobby was woodcarving, and he spent many hours carving various forms of waterfowl from pieces of driftwood that washed up on the lakeshore. Most of his beautiful collection was left to the Wilson Museum.

Walter was also held in high esteem by the young people in the community, and we recall a letter we once received from Niagara Falls Attorney, Earl W. Brydges, Jr. who wrote: "The Wilson Brothers were so much a part of the community that as each of them passes, a piece of the village goes with them".

Merle and his father, Billie, once lost their sailboat. They would take in their sails at night but when the Luther Wilson Warehouse burned, in all the excitement, they forgot. After the fire, they discovered the boat was gone. They took a steamer to Toronto where they saw the boat at anchor in the harbor. They notified the Sheriff and the thieves were brought to trial and consequently sent to jail. The historic warehouse was never rebuilt

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THE "BOATHOUSE" WILSONS

WILSON BOATHOUSE IN THE 1930-40 ERA

BOAT NAMED FOR DOCK-SETTERS

"DOCKSETTER" IN HARBOR

BOAT NAMED FOR DOCK-SETTERS

Around the turn of the century, Wilson was well-known as a resort center with most of its activities centered around Lake Island Park and "Sunset Island" Visitors were attracted to the Pittsburgh Hotel, the Huntington Lodge, and the Harris Cottage, while others patronized the spacious accommodations provided in the village by the Sutherland Hotel and Tower House.

The Park was very popular as a picnic area, and provided many recreational opportunities such as bath houses, water slide, row boats, and ball park. Also, starting in July, 1891, the annual farmers' picnics were held each year attracting thousands of persons. Ball games were held regularly and 5,000 area residents and Canadians watched as the "Niagara Falls Dolphins" defeated the "Toronto Wilmots", The Harris Pavilion attracted thousands of people for dancing and refreshments, while others enjoyed bowling, tennis, boating, or picnicking in the beautiful Maple Groves.

"Jake" Miller of Pittsburgh spent many summers at the Island where he acquired land and built and sold cottages. He was an electrical engineer by trade, and when he retired in 1905, he decided to make a number of improvements on the island which included installation of acetylene gas and erecting a water tower and pumping station. This allowed water to be piped into each cottage. Foremost of his accomplishments was a power plant which he built to provide electricity to island residents--several years before electricity was provided in the village.

As Wilson became better known as a resort town, the influx of thousands of vacationers made it necessary to provide better ways to transport people to and from the Island. The steamer, "Euridice" made regular trips from Toronto, Canada, and unloaded hundreds of Canadians at the piers each season. Other steamers like the "Cambria" and "Columbus" had a capacity of 600 passengers. Mr. Miller acquired a fairly large covered paddle-wheel steamer named the "Duquesne". It served as a recreational vessel for several years, but when the boathouse was purchased by Timothy Wilson, the steamer was replaced by an in-board gasoline launch named the "O-So-Eazie."

Miller also improvised a couple other ways to get to the Island. One was a cable-car that was strung across the bay connecting the Island Yacht Club with "Sunset Island." Jake also built a rope-plank bridge between the store at Miller's Landing and the mainland. This walk-over bridge, suspended by ropes, was used only in the winter time.

Timothy Wilson built a dock for his new launch, the "Red Boat", which replaced the O-So-Eazie. In a few years the Wilson Brothers, Walter, Floyd, and Emerson, built the "Docksetter" to ferry people to the Island, and for commercial fishing it was said to have a capacity of 35 or 40 people or one half ton of fish. The late Walter Wilson once told how the boat got its name. A couple owned a cottage along the lake. When they brought their boat into the harbor, they would see a lot of people sitting on the boathouse dock. That amused them and he would say to his wife, "Look at all the dock setters at the boathouse". Walter liked the story and decided to name the boat "Docksetter".

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FISHING FAMILY

The late Merle Wilson spent 63 years of his life as a commercial fisherman in Wilson. Some interesting stories abut his life might never have been recorded if it had not been for one of his young admirers, Ricky Schmidle, who once taped an interview he had with Merle. It appears that Merle's fishing career began in 1901 when his father, William, decided to take his son out of school to help him. That was when Merle and his brother Fred began to learn the often dangerous business of commercial fishing.

The boat they used had a sail and three pair of oars. They usually placed their nets up to six miles out on the lake where the would often catch five or six hundred pounds of herring. The catch was usually packed in ice and shipped to New York City from the Wilson Depot.

The young fisherman admitted that they were scared many times, one time especially, in January, when they left the harbor at 8:00 AM on a cold, blustery morning. They found they were all alone in the lake about six miles north of Olcott, by the end of the day. The boys wanted their father to pull into the harbor, but the old fisherman decided he could find their way back to Wilson by following the shoreline. As darkness closed in, they rowed their boat against strong southwest winds as huge ice banks towered above them along the shore. They finally managed to bring their boat in between the old wooden piers at Wilson where 150 people had lined up along the shore to give them a hand. They had waited patiently for hours, but many feared the Wilsons had been lost in the lake.

Merle noted that many of the fish that he caught in his earlier years were perch, trout, whitefish, pike, and sturgeon, and that the first fish to disappear were the whitefish and trout. By the mid 1930's commercial fishing had fallen off dramatically.

One time, in late October, Merle got tired of "sitting around" and decided to put some nets in the water again. His father told him it would be a waste of time, and when he talked with Fred Wheeler, he received little encouragement from him either. Fred in fact, jokingly suggested he put his nets up in his front yard where he said he would probably catch as many fish as he would if he placed the nets in the lake. None-the-less, they took off at daybreak and placed three nets--one off the piers and two west of the piers. The following morning was one they would never forget. All three nets were found loaded with fish and by the time they were all pulled into the boat they had over 1800 pounds of blue pike. The boat was so low in the water that William Wilson, who was watching from shore, thought the boat had sprung a leak. After the men happily packed the fish in ice in 60 pound boxes, they were taken to a local distributor.

In 1940, Merle decided to build a new boat, and things went well until 1946 when a sandbar formed across the mouth of the creek and he could no longer get his 28 foot boat in or out of the harbor.

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FISHING FAMILY

Merle took the boat to Olcott and operated it from there for two years until in 1948, the government dredged the channel at Wilson and built two new piers.

One time Merle took Frank Rignell on a fishing trip six miles west of Wilson. While setting their nets the motor conked out, and they had to rig a small sail and head for Youngstown. As they neared the Niagara River they were stopped by the Coast Guard and asked where they were from. Merle asked if they would tow them into Youngstown so they could get their motor fixed. Instead the Coast Guard officer offered to tow them to Wilson. It was a ride they would never forget. The waves were kicking up from a strong northeast wind, and when the Coast Guard vessel opened engines full throttle, Merle and Frank were soon drenched to the skin. They said that when they reached the Wilson harbor they felt like a pair of drowned rats.

Merle was grateful for the favor, however, and told the crew to go to the Boathouse and get all they wanted to eat and drink. The Coast Guard Captain refused to take any money, but told Merle if he would write the Coast Guard base and make a report of what had happened, it would do them more good than getting a free lunch. Merle was more than happy to do so.

Merle gave up fishing and sold his boat in 1963. Since no one was interested in old nets and buoys, some of these were donated to the Wilson Museum

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LEWELLYN AND MERLE WILSON WITH LAKE STURGEON

LEWELLYN, BILLY, MERLE WILSON - 1940

NIAGARA FRONTIER BUILDER

The late Walter Johnson, founder of the Johnson Construction Company, was 93 years old when he talked about his earlier days in Wilson, and the conditions that prevailed around the beginning the the 20th Century.

He was born on the McClew Road in Newfane in 1887, but shortly thereafter, moved with his family to a small farm on the south side of Chestnut Road in South Wilson. At age 15, he lived and worked on the farm of Edgar Bull at the corner of Chestnut and Irish Roads. His bedroom extended off the west wing of the Bull home so he could come and go as he pleased. (The house is now the home of the Darrell Smith family.) Franklin Bull, father of Edgar, lived next door on the east, and the Bull lands extended along both sides of Chestnut Road. Young Walter helped harvest large amounts of cabbage, apples, melons, cucumbers, and tomatoes, which were taken to market in Buffalo.

Going to market was no easy task, and farmers like Fred Thilk and Edgar Bull often drove to market together. The roads were really rough and muddy and, since it was hard to climb the Cambria Center and Baker hills, they would usually hitch both teams to one wagon. After driving one load to the top of the hill, they would return for the other wagon. The wagons had wide racks with a capacity of 75 or 80 bushels of produce. They were built and assembled by "Hub" Stockwell and his four sons and, it was not unusual for them to shoe 25 or 30 horses in one day at their blacksmith shop at Stockwell's Corners.

Walter Johnson was 23 years old when he decided to leave East Wilson to buy himself a farm on the Pletcher Road for $1.00 down and "the rest when he was able." That move was what started him as a builder because he had a lot of carpentry work to do before he could get the place in shape so he could get married. He finally was able to "take the plunge" and eloped with Laura Wiseman, and their first son was born in their log cabin home. After their first winter, he built a new house, and as his prowess as a builder became known, other farmers hired him to do work for them.

Mr. Johnson said his secret for his success was, "Hard work, good credit, and hiring good men and treating them right." He remembered Wilson by saying, "There is no better farming area, no better place to live, and no better people to associate with. I've always regarded Wilson people as hard working, energetic, and honest".

In view of Mr. Johnson's success as a builder, it was ironic that his father opposed it, and told his son to "Stick to farming--you don't know anything about construction." He didn't live to see his son build shopping centers, hundreds of houses, and a number of schools including Gaskill Junior High. He also built the first surgical building at Niagara Falls Memorial Hospital, as well as a 201 apartment complex on Cedar Street. The Tower apartments in Lockport were also erected by his company, and they also did work for companies like Caborundum, Union Carbide, Hooker Chemical and Harrison Radiator.

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THE "FLAPPER AGE"

Old Timers often reminisce about the "Good Old Days" when they were growing up and the world, according to them, was a better place to live.

We recalled that people seemed to be a little more self-reliant, and most had to make do with what they had. We remember, for instance, if you ran out of tooth paste, you could make up a simple substitute by mixing salt and soda. If you ran out of sandwich bags, you could always use the wax paper inside the cereal box. Paste was always easily available by mixing flour and water. And how many times did mothers mix raw onions with sugar syrup to relieve a nagging cough?

The "flapper" age brings memories of short, tight skirts and the boyish bob--womens' big challenge to the Victorian Age. The "Charleston" dance was all the rage, and to the younger generation everything was the "Cat's Meow". The girls attracted attention with their rolled down hose and yellow slickers, while the young men in college, (who could afford them) wore raccoon coats. And who could ever forget those wool-striped bathing suits with knee length pants, and the girls with their "balloon" skirts and umbrellas to ward off the hot rays from the sun.

It was an exciting time when the first sound or "talking movies" hit the scene, but we think one of the biggest thrills was when we heard radio broadcast the first time from station KDKA in Pittsburgh. That was an occasion when fifty youngsters lined up in a drugstore to listen to a minute or two of radio broadcast through earphones strapped over our heads. Shortly thereafter, radio sets in people's homes were being tuned in to shows like "Amos "N Andy", "The Shadow", "Inter Sanctum", "Ma Perkins", or "One Man's Family".

The old Silent Movie days were great for the kids, and for a dime you could sit all afternoon and watch comedies, drama, and westerns as the sometimes skillful piano player beat out an ever changing rhythm to accompany the action on screen. Movies with Tom Mix and his horse , "Tony" , were favorites with us kids, but we also recall attending a Charlie Chaplin movie, "The Kid", when all admissions required the donation of a can of condensed milk. The milk collection was part of our country's program to help feed the starving children in Europe after World War I.

We believe the Model-T Ford was the real forerunner and phenomenon of the early 1900's , but by the 1920's other car manufacturers began to compete. This led to Ford introducing its fabulous Model-A, a snappy little car that could run all day at a speed of 45 miles per hour. At the time, we probably didn't appreciate being able to pull up at a service station, handing the attendant a one dollar bill and telling him to "fill her up".

Perhaps each generation has its "Good Old Days" when oldsters look back on their childhood years, but our impression of our early years is that they were slower paced and a more relaxed time when people didn't seem to be in such a rush, so easily agitated, or so deeply distressed.

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SELF SUFFICIENT RURAL RESIDENTS

Anyone in the 80 or 90 year bracket probably remembers when most families, especially those in rural communities, were very self-sufficient. Many raised their own food in large gardens, and some vegetables and fruits were preserved by drying before the art of canning was perfected. Meats were often salted and smoked and hung in unheated rooms for future use, and pork was salted in brine and preserved in large stone crocks or barrels. Most houses were built with large cellars or attics which not only served as a place to store meats and vegetables, but also provided a place to hang the wash in bad weather.

Before farmers shipped milk, they generally kept just enough cows to provide milk and butter for their own families, while those who had more cows made cottage cheese and butter which was packed in stone crocks. A piece of cloth from an old sheet or pillowcase was often placed over the crocks to draw out the moisture and help preserve the butter.

Many farmers had regular customers who would drive from the city to purchase butter, eggs, chickens, garden produce or fresh fruits--a custom that continues today with numerous fruit and vegetable stands in the area.

Although rural residents were self-sufficient, they still had to make weekly trips to town where they would visit the local grocer to obtain items such as coffee, tea, sugar, flour, spices and molasses. Many women pickled fruits such as pears, peaches, and cherries, while bushels of pears and apples were made into butter. Every farmhouse had its own barrel of vinegar, and hard cider in the cellar and it wasn't too unusual to see friends or neighbors stopping in now and then to check the contents.

Farm wives used to make their own soap, and in the days before concentrated lye came into use, farmers would make their own. This was done by making a leech barrel which was filled about half full with wheat straw over which wood ashes were dumped. The barrel was then filled to the top with straw and placed on a foundation above the ground. A hole for a spigot was drilled in the barrel about ten inches from the bottom, and the contents of the barrel was then filled with water. As the water seeped through the straw and ashes, a lye solution was produced and drained off through the spigot into wooden pails. It could only be stored in wood or porcelain and if the liquid got on the skin it would burn very badly. Both hard and soft soap was made from the lye solution, and the soft soap, which was dark brown in color, was often kept in barrels. The hard soap was cream colored, and was poured into pans where it hardened and could be cut up later into bars. The bar soap was often scented by the housewife to take away the strong odor of lye. The soap generally had exceptional cleaning power, and was also highly recommended for use following one's exposure to poison ivy.

Our grandparents of the late 1800's learned to get along with what they had, and didn't enjoy the comforts that many of us have today, but their rugged individualism, no doubt, provided their descendants with the aptitude necessary to develop the amazing computerized society that we live in today.

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WILSON IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The late Fay Campbell entered this world when the horse and buggy was beginning to make way for that new fangled invention, the "horse less carriage'. In fact, when he was six years old, he got the thrill of his life when Stanley Dwight gave him a ride in his new creation, the Wilson Automobile. He recalled that the machine was built by Dwight's new Wilson Automobile Manufacturing Company and appeared to look like a buggy seat on a platform supported by four wheels. It was steered by a handle attached to a bar extending from the front axle.

A few years later, when Fay was ten years old, he, Willie Bell, Eddie Fillingham, and Earl Armstrong, decided to build their own "auto" from a Democrat Wagon. They steered it with a couple of ropes and pushed it back of the golf course where they rolled it down a steep hill. Unfortunately, Fay broke his leg when he got it caught in one of the wheels, and Dr. Draper put his leg in a cast and he had to lie in bed for a month until it healed.

Fay's grandparents owned the property that would later be know as the Foote Farm and, at that time it was connected to "Sunset Island" by a narrow peninsula--sometimes known as the sheep path because sheep were driven over it to the "Island" where they could graze in comparative safety.

There used to be a lot of ice-skating parties on Twelve Mile Creek, and Fay recalled that he saw as many as 200 couples on the Creek at one time. He believed that two of the best young skating couples were Floyd and Margaret Wilson and Lou and Bessie Crawford, and since the peninsula separated the Creek from the Lake, skaters could go up the Creek beyond Plumb's Bridge.

Harwood later bought the Foote Farm, and Roosevelt Beach was born when he developed the property into 20 foot lots for cottages. Since the lots were small, sewage was inadequate and later became a problem.

The Campbell home was about a mile west of the village on Route 18 and, as Roosevelt Beach developed, the Campbells found a good market for their chickens, eggs, fruit, and other produce. Fay, who was the oldest of the "Campbell Kids", quit high school at the end of his second year to help his father who was crippled with rheumatism. During the winter months he found other things to do and, at age eighteen, worked in the Taggart and Stevens Warehouse near the depot. That was the year the 1912 station was remodeled, and he remembered seeing the bricklayers lay the walks around the depot. Taggart sometimes had his workers nail covers on apple barrels at the Coomer Road siding, and the apple-filled barrels had to be piled three high. Since Fay was s of slight build, it was hard for him to do it, and he believed it was one of the hardest jobs he ever had.

Some of the gravel that was used to build local highways was dug by hand along the north shore of "Sunset Island". As a result, large holes were formed as men used shovels and dynamite to break up the gravel. The gravel was shoveled into wagons, but could only be brought to the mainland when Twelve Mile Creek was frozen.

Sometimes, the heavy wagons with their teams would break through the ice, and other teams had to be used to pull them out. Merritt Swick was one of the drivers that broke through the ice quite often. It didn't seem to bother him too much--he'd just go home, get his team of mules, then pull his horses and wagon onto dry land.

Another custom of those early days was to visit the barber on Saturday night. Few men bothered to shave themselves so the five or six barbers in Wilson were always kept busy.

There were no organized sporting events at the school so basketball games were played in the hall back of the Johnson/Middleton Drugstore. Roller skating was also enjoyed there, and Fay recalled that he used to peddle bills all day for the Wilson "Star" to earn a quarter for skating.

During World War I, he belonged to the Home Guard, and there were 108 men in his outfit. They were commanded by Jules Weaver, Captain, "Butch" Bigalow, First Lieut., Mark Wilson, Second Lieut., and Harry Holden, Third Lieut., and they drilled all winter long. Their gray uniforms, leggings, and hats, were furnished by the government.

It was around 1925 when Fay decided to go into the grocery business. He remembered the time well because it was when the first water lines were being laid in the village. He could never forget the time when "Bookie" Wilson drove his truck into one of the open trenches, and it took three days to get it out.

Fay's younger sister, Dora Wakeman, recalled that the store was on Young Street at the site of the present Laundromat and Health Club, and believes that the old building behind the Laundromat was once the ice house used in connection with the grocery store.

Fay sold Blue Ribbon Hot Dogs, and it was about 1926 when he entered a "Blue Ribbon Float" in the Fireman's Field Day Parade and won first prize.

One day a hobo came to the store looking for work, and Fay asked him if he could cut meat. The hobo said that he could because his father once owned a butcher shop in Chicago. Fay told him to get cleaned up, which he did, and he soon became a very good employee at the store.

In the early days of the Great Depression, the Wilson State Bank closed, "freezing" everyone's assets. Fay took a Civil Service exam and became a substitute for mail carrier, William Kruske. They divided the route and Fay's portion was nine miles long. After meeting the mail train in the morning and making his rounds, it was often dark when he returned home with his horse and buggy. He gave up his mail route, and decided to go into the gladiola business. He started out by planting one million bulbs on 40 acres of land. Bulbs had to be planted by hand starting June 28th through July 10th. He figured that in his best year, he harvested 12-15 dozen "Glads" a day, but after seven years he decided that fighting disease and the weather was not worth the effort.

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THE OLD GRAY MARE

Anyone who has ever walked behind a one-horse plow or cultivator might agree that the old "farm plug" was easily trained and readily adaptable to any kind of task. It was able to adjust quickly and seemed to have an uncanny instinct to follow the right row or make the right turn with little or no help from the driver. It could usually be guided by a gentle pull or touch of the reins but sometimes, if mistreated or frightened, it would take the bit in its teeth and race out of control.

One time, while making my daily trek to the old Parker High School at Clarence, New York, we noticed a horse and buggy approaching about a mile down the road. We could see a woman standing up in front of the rig pulling on the reins and yelling "whoa" at the top of her lungs, but to no avail--the horse appeared to be in full control. About the time we decided to jump into the ditch to avoid being run down, the horse apparently had the same idea, and over he flew with the buggy bouncing high in the air. How the lady managed to stay with it, we will never know, but both horse and buggy continued across the field until they crashed into a fence line. When we reached the site, the lady, apparently unhurt, was standing by the horse's head, petting him and trying to calm him. We managed to free him from the harness and, as she led him back to the highway the last thing we heard her say was, "Poor Joe, did something scare my boy?" It was apparent she was more concerned for the horse than for her own safety.

Les Clark told us a story recently about a horse his grandfather used to own called "Bluebell". Although she was blind she was trained to respond to voice commands like 'giddy up' and 'whoa' while 'gee' and 'haw' were used to back up. He had one more important command that came in handy around 2:00 AM when, after a night out, he'd climb into his buckboard and say, "get me home'. Once the rig was under motion grandpa would fall asleep and old "Bluebell" would faithfully walk to the barn where both would sleep until the morning sun woke them up.

Old timers can probably remember the horse-pulled ice wagons that were once so familiar in villages and town, and some may remember Ackerman's yellow dairy wagon with the blue lettering on its sides advertising 'Ackerman's Dairy--Grade A Milk'. The driver, Chris Eggert, drove while standing up with the reins from the horse passing through the glass windshield. As he distributed milk to each house, the horse would follow along--starting and stopping as necessary.

George Wilson had a team of versatile horses that could pull a plow, harrow, drag, mower, or wagon and each piece of equipment required correct handling, but the team always knew what to do. George grew a lot of peas on his farm, and drove many wagon loads to the canning factory near the depot. All the peas did not always reach the factory however, because the village kids liked to pull the vines from the wagon so they could fill up on fresh peas.

"The Old Gray Mare She Ain't What She Used To Be" has had to step aside for fast moving cars and trucks, yet old dobbin has its advantages and did a good job in its day.

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OLD CARS AND OLD TALES

The Wilson Museum has a pretty fair collection of old cars and, when looking at some of them, our thoughts drift back to the early 20's when the 'horseless carriage' was still having a hard time competing with the horse and buggy.

In the 1900's many new cars were built to satisfy the hopes and dreams of budding young entrepreneurs, and even in Wilson they had their Wilson Auto Manufacturing Company. It was here that the first "Niagara Runabout" was engineered and built by Stanley Wright, George Brooks, and George Whiteside. They organized the company on October 22, 1900, and the first car was built in Brook's Machine Shop which stood beside the old grist mill on West Young Street. Later, the company moved into the old Creamery Building that used to stand near the Methodist Church.

The dream of an auto empire in Wilson fizzled out in 1905 when the company was forced to close due to the lack of financial backing. A few cars were produced before then, however, and their general appearance was similar to the 1904 "Covert" on display at the Wilson Museum.

After the Wilson Auto Company went out of business, the E. R. Thomas Company of Buffalo acquired the patent rights on Special Power Transmission Gearing Box that George Whiteside had designed, and he was given the position of head mechanic with the Thomas Company. He not only helped develop the champion "Around The World Car", but also helped equip other historic models such as the "Grand Prix Racer", "Thomas Flyer", and "Thomas Forty".

We recall going on a drive in the family's Buick Touring Car one Sunday afternoon, and when we started up a small hill we became "stuck" -- a slight dusting of snow was just enough to prevent the car's narrow tires to get traction. In a nearby field, a farmer with a team of horses watched as we tried in vain to reach the top, and suddenly he unhitched his team and drove over to our car. Without saying a word, he hooked a chain to our front axle and towed us up the hill, He wouldn't take anything for his trouble and as he went back to his wagon, he gave us a friendly wave as we drove off. Good Samaritans were abundant in those days.

Many times when cars were sold in the early 1900's , they were road-tested and driven to the buyer's home. An old letter in the effects of the late George Whiteside seems to bear this out as he describes how he drove a Limousine Tonneau from Kansas City to St. Louis. " I covered 61 miles the first day. I kept the car in a livery stable that night, but in the morning the roads very muddy from an overnight rain. The car was often in mud up to its axles, and I didn't take it out of low gear for four hours. After running out of gas I had to walk three miles to the Missouri River where I caught a Ferry across to the other side and found a gas station. I finally reached St. Louis and didn't even have to change a spark plug." After Whiteside delivered the Limousine to his customer, he stayed in St. Louis for two weeks to show the gentleman how to operate and maintain his car.

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JAILHOUSE BLUES

The late Paul Middleton once said that the if you watched the television series "Gunsmoke" it would give you a pretty good idea how the village of Wilson looked in the late 1800's--dirt roads, hitching posts, board walks, and even a jail for those ornery cusses who wouldn't obey the village ordinances. We reckon the former drugstore operator knew what he was talking about because he was born and raised on Young Street, and really could remember what Wilson used to look like.

The village didn't have a Wyatt Earp, but they did have Constable Ben Stone, and Ben made sure there was peace and tranquility in the small lakeshore community. Ben's jail was located between Sanford's Tile Yard and the old Masonic Building, and it was erected there in 1900 when the old Collegiate Institute was torn down. The outdoor toilets that were located behind the Institute were fairly large and, rather than destroy them, the village fathers decided to move them to Young Street for use as a jail. The partition was removed that once separated the girls from the boys, and two barred cells were built into it by Jesse Biggins who operated a blacksmith shop on Catherine Street. The jail was operated by the village for the next 20 years, then moved next to the old water tower on High Street.

An amusing story was told by the late Earl Armstrong, a former Niagara County Deputy Sheriff, who used to stop at the jail while he was a young man in High School. One day he walked into one of the cells to look it over, and some one slammed the door shut behind him. Whoever did it, took off, and since Constable William Lort was driving in the country with his horse and buggy, Earl was not only unable to get help but went without any supper. To make matters worse, he had a date with a girl on the "island", and when he didn't show up, "she got mad as hops'. The hapless Earl was unable to get out of the "cooler" until 9:00 PM when Constable Lort returned to the village. Earl didn't mind his "jail term" as much as he did missing the date with his girl, but she would not have anything to do with him until some of his friends finally told her the truth about what had happened.

The old village lockup was kept in use until about 1932 when an inspection was made by Walter Nicholson, Chairman of the State Board of Corrections. His report, which was submitted to Fred Bigalow, Town Supervisor, and A. M. McIlroy, Mayor of the Village, read as follows: "This lockup occupies a small one-story wood building on the village outskirts, and contains one latticed steel cell and one wooden cell with latticed steel door. Cells are equipped with bunks, mattresses, blankets, and comfortables. There are no sanitary facilities what-so-ever, but there is an electric light and stove for heating. Since the last inspection the lockup has been painted throughout with white enamel paint, and is in good condition. Constable William Lort has stated that detentions are seldom made here, and the lockup is frequently used for lodgers."

The Commissioner's report ended with a recommendation that "when the lockup is used for detention purposes it should be kept under constant and competent supervision as fire risk is extreme by reason of the type of construction.

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THE "DIRTY THIRTIES"

Let's take a look back to the early 1930's when things were really tough because of the depression. The country didn't have quite as large a population as it has today, yet 25% of our Nation's work force was unemployed. This meant that about 15 million wage earners were without jobs, and if we can believe the statistics, double that number were spouses and children dependent on those workers. Yes, there was a time in our nation's history when only one wage earner was needed to support the family--and that wage earner was usually the father. Jobs were hard to find, and unemployed men often stood on street corners selling apples for a penny apiece; thousands of hungry people, in search of a little nourishment, could be seen standing in long soup lines; and people would accept any kind of job they could get.

Salaries were minimal, however, and farm hands were lucky to make $200 a year. Waitresses were payed about $500 a year, and school teachers, always underpaid until recent times, averaged about $1200 annually. The familiar song, "Brother Can You Spare a Dime", was a by-product of the depression, and its lyrics were more truth than poetry. It was next to impossible to walk down any city street without being stopped several times by destitute people, all with the same plaintiff cry, "Can you spare a dime for a cup of coffee?" A good home could be purchased for $3000, and a new car for $500, yet in spite of the hard times, people could still laugh and smile through their problems--they had to or the whole country might have collapsed.

Little things like jig saw puzzles, card games, or radio programs helped relieve the tension and worry, and some radio shows kept thousands of listeners "glued" to their radio sets all evening. One was the Amos 'n' Andy show, and when they were on the air telphone exchanges had little to do while they performed. Other popular favorites included the Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy show; Fibber McGee and Molly; or the venerable old favorites, George Burns and Gracie Allen. One possible advantage the radio had over its television counterpart of today was that a woman could do the housework, wash clothes, iron, or prepare dinner while listening to her favorite "soaps".

The 30's also had their exciting moments with gangsters such as "Bonnie and Clyde", "Machine Gun Kelly", or "John Dillinger" terrorizing the countryside--with many of their exploits still dramatized on television.

The impact of the "Bank Holiday" was felt nationwide, and many small depositors in a rural town like Wilson suffered severe losses. New laws were enacted to protect future depositors, but new laws weren't good enough to prevent billions of dollars in bank failures, because bank regulators and politicians were too lax in monitoring the system.

When Prohibition was repealed, the days of the rum-runner and "speakeasies" came to an end, but it was also the time when the New Deal began to take shape. One of Wilson's own in the Roosevelt Cabinet was Rex Tugwell, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, and a close friend and advisor to the President.

THE "DIRTY THIRTIES"

Soon everyone was trying to familiarize themselves with the Administation's "alphabet soup", and one the first programs was the NRA (The National Recovery Act) which was put in place to regulate wages, hours, and prices. Then millions of young men and women were put to work by the Works Progress Administration, better known as the WPA. This agency pulled many young men from the bread lines to build roads, bridges, schools, and other worthwhile projects--many of which benefit the country to this day. Another of Roosevelt's controversial programs was the CCC or Civilian Conservation Corps, which put two million young men to work for $30 a month planting trees, restoring battlesites, building campgrounds, and othr projects beneficial to the Nation. Although not always popular with the vested interests, the New Deal programs took millions of people off the jobless rolls and started the country back on the road to prosperity.

A couple of great movies, "Gone With the Wind" and "The Wizard of Oz" helped close out the decade of the "dirty thirties", but it was probably Roosevelt's theme song, "Happy Days are Here Again" that gave many Americans a hope for the future. We believe that anyone who lived through the dust-bowl days of the 30's , can be glad they survived the "Great Depression" but would hope and pray we never have another.

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THE "O-SO-EZY" ENTERING THE HARBOR WITH HAPPY BOATING ENTHUSIASTS

DECADE OF THE FORTIES

We have often wondered why the 1940's were called the "fabulous forties"--they certainly didn't start out that way. Europe was already fighting World War II, but the full impact of that conflict really didn't effect us until December 7, 1941, after Japan's infamous attack on Pearl Harbor. We recall how quickly this changed the normal routine of our lives. Harrison Radiator shut down some departments to retool for war production, and as the country geared up, thousands of men and women entered the work force to build tanks, ships ammunition, and all kinds of war related items. Thousands more were selected to enter the armed forces and prepare to meet the enemy in both the Atlantic and the Pacific.

It was also a time when it was discovered that women could drive trucks and buses, do plumbing work, or collect garbage as well as men, and before long, many jobs that had always been considered mens' work were capably being held by women. Soon, "Rosie the Riveter" was turning out fighter planes and bombers, and became the symbol of millions of women supporting the war effort. The war taught Americans that no sacrifice was too great to support the fifteen million men and women who would eventually enter the military. We soon became accustomed to rationing stamps and air raid drills, and even though we don't recall any enemy planes ever approaching our shores, black-outs and dim-outs became routine--just in case.

Many items were in short supply, so everyone pitched in to support rubber drives, scrap metal drives, and war bond drives, and many women turned in their stockings to hold powder for guns. Old stoves and iron of every kind were turned in to help the war effort, and Victory Gardens all over America, at one time, provided almost half the nations's food requirements.

And then there was rationing. An A stamp on your car's windshield would allow you to purchase three gallons of gas a week, but if you needed more for work you might qualify for a B stamp. Food stamps kept the confused housewife crazy trying to figure out point values for food she wished to buy, and we recall that the system, although necessary, used to drive local shop keepers "up the wall". Everyone did their best to cooperate. because the need to conserve food and energy was essential.

War security to protect loved ones overseas was foremost in every ones mind, and everywhere you looked there were posters warning that "Loose Lips Sink Ships".

There were hundreds of moral-boosting hit songs, but the one we liked best was "Praise The Lord and Pass The Ammunition". Although we may not be entirely correct in our facts, we believe the song originated when Pearl Harbor was attacked, and a Chaplain aboard one of the bombed ships told the crew he couldn't hold church services right then but suggested they "Praise The Lord and Pass The Ammunition".

DECADE OF THE FORTIES

Perhaps the first time we remember kids being referred to as teen agers was during the war. They were too young to enter the armed forces, but replaced older boys who did , as soda jerks, etc. while teen age girls did their part as baby sitters for working parents on night shifts. Those "teen-agers" are 65 or 70 years old today, and probably look back fondly on those teen hops, slumber parties, dances, and skating rink parties--to say nothing of the "Zoot Suits".

There was hope that life would return to normal after "D" Day, June 6, 1944, but the war raged on nearly a year until May, 1945, when Germany surrendered. President Roosevelt died before the war ended, but his successor, President Harry Truman, ended the war in the Pacific a few months later when the atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Some questioned the president's decision to use the bomb, but others conceded that millions of Americans would have lost their lives if Japan had been invaded.

Life was not the same after the war. There were housing shortages, and cars and other major items not built during the war, were in short supply. As things picked up, sports which had been in a slump during the war, regained prominence, and in 1947 Jackie Robinson became the first black man to play in the major leagues with the Brooklyn Dodgers. In football, Otto Graham became one of the outstanding quarterbacks in the All-America Football Conference, and thousands were able to watch him on television as the media "toy" filled more and more homes.

As new cars began appearing in auto showrooms again, two new models made their appearance, the Kaiser and the Frazer, but it was probably the demand for both housing and cars that caused a real change in America's life style. Developers began building tracts of houses around larger cities, and young couples and their families moved in to them creating what we know today as "suburban living".

Well, looking back, perhaps they were the "Fabulous Forties".

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ALWAYS BUSY AROUND THE WILSON BOATHOUSE AND HARBOR

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY

It is said that "War is Hell", but it took World War II to shake the long standing tradition that "Women's place is in the home" and, with thousands of them entering the work force in 1942, to back their men in arms, a trend developed that would never again see women restricted in the labor market.

Winnie Fischer of Wilson recently recalled the 1940's when married women didn't work in banks, and remembered one young lady who was secretly married, and when she became pregnant, "lost her job in a hurry". These conditions began to change by 1942 when thousands of men entered the armed forces and business establishments soon became hard pressed to find help. That was when they made the remarkable discovery that many women could do as well or better on jobs that, up to then, had been considered mens' work. On February 28, 1942, one of the headlines in a Tonawanda newspaper read, "State Trust names woman as a teller; Miss Winifred Helwig will take over a male teller's place on Monday. The article then goes on to explain , "Women tellers are being tried out by many banks at present due to the large number of male tellers that are being called into the army".

Since many people today spend from $75 to $150 dollars a week for groceries, they might find it hard to believe that back in the early 40's, people actually worked for $10 or $15 dollars a week. In fact, Winnie recalled that her first job on the paper paid only $9 per week. She later made $12 a week working for a lumber company, and when the opportunity came to work in the bank for $15 dollars a week, she thought she was "sitting on top of the world".

The comparatively low wages of yesteryear, however, went further because of the relatively low cost of living. For instance, a $3 outlay for groceries could feed a small family for a week; also, medical expenses were unbelievably low compared to today.

Winnie provided us with several copies of old medical bills from DeGraff Memorial Hospital which bears this out. One shows a operating room charge for $7.50, plus 4 days in a ward @ $2.50 per day for a total of $17.50. Another bill dated April 22, 1942 lists nine and two thirds days of private room service @ $6 per day for a total of $62 dollars.

Everyone is aware, of course, that conditions have greatly changed in the past 30 years with everything from food, to cars, to homes, skyrocketing out of sight. Perhaps the greatest change to come about since the days of World War II has been the progress made by women in their ongoing search for "Women's Lib" and, with a new found freedom in the work place, they have advanced steadily in rolls of leadership in both the business and the political world. With our country three trillion dollars in debt, it's about time. Perhaps there's more truth than humor in a recent advertising slogan, "You've Come a Long Way, Baby".

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'76 BICENTENNIAL RECALLED

March, 1975, the Wilson Historical Society was designated by the Wilson Village and Town Boards to act on their behalf in all planning of activities related to the celebration of our Nations's Bicentennial Year of 1976. Dr. John F. Argue, President, appointed the following members to serve on the Bicentennial Committee: Dorothy Thilk, Chairman; Eleanor Myers, Don Croop, Millie Croop, Whitney Barnum, Lois Barnum, Harold Mosher, Barbara Mosher, Gerry Swann, Rex Stacy, Winnie Stacy, Marion Campbell, Janet Sporleder, and Helen Borngraeber.

An application outlining a proposed program to celebrate the Bicentennial in Wilson was submitted to the New York State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission in Albany, and an answer was received forthwith, by the committee confirming that the Town and Village of Wilson were approved as an official Bicentennial Community. Russell Parker, Niagara County legislator, presented the Bicentennial Flag and official certificate to the Town, at the meeting of the Historical Society, and Whitney Barnum, Town Supervisor, accepted the recognition.

In the fall of 1975, two prizes were awarded by the committee for the best floats in the Fireman's Field Days parade depicting the best theme for the Bicentennial. The Wilson Alley Cats 4-H Club received the first prize of $25, and Cub Pack #2 1 was awarded the $15 second prize.

In February, 1976, the Wilson Lions Club sponsored a Bicentennial Dance at the Elk's Club in Lockport, with Don Keller playing for dancing from 9:00 to 1:00 PM. One hundred fifty couples from Wilson attended the dinner dance. Another successful event that month was the South Wilson Fire Company "Folk Dance" which was held at the firehall and very well attended.

The Village and Town Boards took action to make the Forsythia Bush the Community's official flowering shrub and, in response to this action, the committee purchased 100 bushes from the Marks' Nursery and planted them in locations around town like the Museum, Town Hall, Krueger Park, and Greenwood Cemetery.

Esther Myers, leader of the Wilson Lakemen 4-H Club, conducted a search to find the largest trees in the township, and signs were provided by the committee to mark the trees chosen. The largest tree was a Popular on the property of Robert Waite, McChesney Street, and was found to measure 17 feet 6 inches in circumference. A Box Elder on the Robert Smith farm at Maple and Nelson Roads measured 14 feet, 7 inches, and the largest Maple Tree was on the property of Herman Thilk, Chestnut Road, which measured 13 feet, 4 inches. All measurements were made three feet above ground level.

A Bicentennial Quilt, which was made by ladies of the Historical Society, was awarded at the Memorial Day Fair to Mrs. Angeline Rice Wood, former home economics teacher at Wilson Central School. The quilt featured blocks for each state in the union, date of entry, and state flower.

The Tabor Bridge and the 1823 Log Cabin in East Wilson were also dedicated and marked, and a "liberty" Flagpole donated by the Hathaway Family was erected on the museum grounds. A "Liberty Tree" was planted on the museum grounds by the Wilson Conservation Club and marked and dedicated at the 1976 Fair.

The Committee purchased and placed brass markers on the thirteen fieldstone and cobblestone houses within the township, and the Cobblestone Trail was laid out and brochures made up to identify the homes on the trail. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was also held to open the Historic Niagara Trail through Wilson.

The Brownie, Intermediate, and Cadet Girl Scouts of Wilson combined efforts to make a Bicentennial Quilt which contained blocks depicting places of interest in Wilson. The quilt was presented to the Historical Society and is on display in the museum.

The four Womens' Clubs in Wilson held a Fashion Show at the High School featuring costumes of "Now and Then", and the event was preserved on film.

The Committee also participated in the burial of the "Time Capsule" at the Courthouse in Lockport, and donated several copies of society booklets for inclusion in the capsule. The time capsule is scheduled to be opened in the year 2076.

Looking back, 1976 was a good year, and many projects sponsored by Wilson organizations, remain with us today as symbols of our past.

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MARINE TRUST BANK EMPLOYEES DRESS FOR 1958 CENTENNIAL
BOTTOM L. TO R. ALICE NELSON, MARGE WILLIAMS, MILLIE CROOP, BARBARA LORT
TOP L. TO R. DORIS LAWSON, MARK HUNTINGTON, EUGENE PEMBROKE MANUEL VON HUEGAL

TROLLEY CAR MEMORIES

As a young boy, one of our occasional entertaining pastimes was to place pennies on the tracks of the old trolley line, then digging them off as souvenirs after the car's wheels flattened them. The motormen didn't seem to mind too much, but it was a different story around the 4th of July when we placed small "Torpedoes" on the tracks. The sharp explosions when the trolley's wheels passed over was exciting, but often caused some of the motormen to clench their fists and yell "loving" epithets at us.

It was around 1919-21 when the Lockport, Buffalo, and Rochester line was operating in its hey-dey, and it was about that time that the line began running high speed cars from Buffalo to Lockport with the right to use the International tracks to Niagara Falls and Olcott Beach. Riding on the Rochester and Lockport trolley was an experience one could never forget and, to a youngster, it seemed like riding on a roller coaster as the lumbering car swayed back and forth over the uneven rails. The running time between Rochester and Lockport was about two hours and, at that time, the trolley was an asset to Lockport because cars were generally loaded with people and produce when they came to the Lock City. The trolley line did run through a very prosperous fruit and vegetable producing area, and annual shipments of produce were said to be close to several millions of dollars.

We recall that most of the cars on the old inter-urban line were painted green, and the car itself was divided into a baggage section, smoker area, and coach which seated approximately fifty people. Many of the cars operated individually, but when hard pressed to accommodate passengers, two-car trains were put in operation. It was said that some of the car "trains" could reach a speed of 80 miles an hour, but we were never on one that did.

When we rode the trolley, our favorite seat was directly back of the door to the motor man's compartment. There you could see far ahead, and we used to marvel how the swaying, speedy car was able to stay on the tracks. There apparently weren't too many accidents when the trolley line began to operate around 1908, but hearsay has it that by 1916 it was a different story. By then, wider use of the automobile meant that every grade crossing was a site for a potential accident, and , from what we've read, many did occur.

Perhaps one of the best know branches of the International Railroad connected Olcott with Lockport, and thousands of summer visitors were attracted to the resort each year. Many elderly residents living today may recall the old Olcott Beach trolley depot.

An old newspaper clipping describes a 70 mile an hour gale that swept through Western New York in 1916 causing considerable damage to the Lockport-Olcott Division of the railroad. No car could be operated over the line for 36 hours because miles of poles and wires were down.

TROLLEY CAR MEMORIES

One of the early innovations of the trolley days were the so called "Toronto Specials". They were very popular for awhile, and the first "boat trains" originated in Rochester, New York and departed from the Court Street Station. The special trains ran to Lockport where International crews took the trolleys to the Olcott Piers. There, the passengers walked out on the piers and boarded the Toronto steamers. Some of the ships operating at that time were the "Olcott", "Argyle" and "Chicora".

When motor buses began to replace the trolley in the 1930's, they were hailed as a great improvement over the trolley car. Never-the-less, old timers who used to ride those pollution free trolleys probably miss the convenience and fun of riding the rails through city and countryside.

Olcott's beautiful Lakeside Park has always been a popular site for family and Sunday school picnics, and thousands of people have enjoyed its beautiful pine groves over the years. Even to this day, it continues to be a popular place for public gatherings and, if projected plans for future development of the park and waterfront are realized, Olcott may once again become one of the biggest attractions in Western New York.

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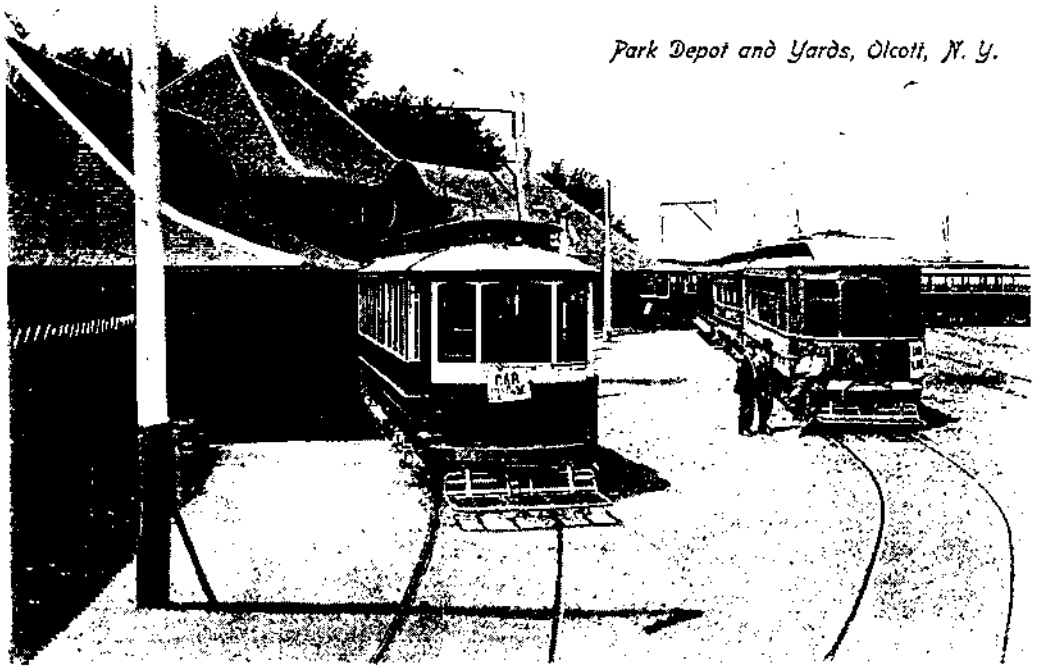

OLD TROLLEY DEPOT AT OLCOTT, NEW YORK

THE RARE OLD WINDMILL

The top section of the windmill was missing for several months, and for good reason--Chuck Messersmith had taken it down and was arranging for necessary repairs. Now the job is done, and once more the rare old windmill is in good working order.

As many probably know, windmills have been around for a very long time, and possibly were one of man's first sources of energy. They are believed to have originated in ancient Persia more than one thousand years ago, and were later adopted by the Chinese. From there they spread all around the world including Niagara County where they became an important source for providing water to early farm homes and thousands of domestic animals.

The windmill on the museum grounds originated in Ogden, Utah, where it was purchased from an Ogden farmer by James Reynolds. He brought it to Wilson, and after considerable urging by the late Dr. John Argue, donated it to the Wilson Historical Society.

Ed Hastings built a reservoir and covered it with a cement platform on which the framework was bolted in place. Chuck Messersmith took charge of the project when it was discovered that the mechanism that drives the windmill was badly in need of repair to make it operable. With help from Don Sinclair, the Pitman arm bearings and main bearing were replaced, and the Air Motor center post was straightened with use of Don's hydraulic press. Dan King also helped out by fabricating nine "Sails" and eleven "Ribs", as well as making a new directional Vane and repairing the Furl Ring.

Fred Fowler patched a hole in the oil reservoir with fiber glass, and Carl Johnson made seven upper sail brackets and helped Chuck straighten the old sails and assemble them. On May 4, 1984, "Red" Clark lifted the windmill into place with his crane, and Chuck Messersmith, Ed Seefeldt, Art Schnoor, Ray Allgeier, "Bud" Ward, and Sid Pettit bolted everything together.

Even though Chuck kept the moving parts oiled every spring, the windmill, like any other piece of mechanical equipment, finally gave out, and he found it necessary to take it down for repairs. He again obtained help from Don Sinclair who repaired an welded several vital parts. In the meantime, Art Schnoor replaced the wood flooring beneath the fan. Miles Linnabery painted the sails and vane, and John Davis, an Industrial Arts teacher, built a new brake for the fan.

On August 29, 1996, following a display of physical fortitude and endurance, Don Farley and Chuck hoisted the fan into position and put everything together. Everyone is grateful to "Chuck" and all the other people who helped to repair the windmill and get it back to good running condition.

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MARKERS HIGHLIGHT WILSON'S PAST

About sixteen historical markers have been erected in the Town of Wilson, and most of them were put in place through the efforts of Janet Sporleder, Chairman of the Historical Sites Committee.

The society has selected sites that are noted for their historical interest, and these include the A. Douglas Pease Farm, "Billy Sherman's Gravesite", Reuben Wilson's Landing, Port of Entry, Wilson Boathouse, Reuben Wilson Home, Collegiate Institute, Tabor Bridge, Wright Homestead, 1824 Log Cabin, "Hojack Park", Randall Road Cemetery, Wilson House Inn, Kruse Brick Kiln, and the Anchor Farm.

Eleanor Myers, Town Historian, once suggested that the site of the former Barnum Foundry on Wood Street might possibly be considered for a historic marker. The Barnum Foundry is listed in the 1869 Niagara County Directory as the Barnum, Wilson Company, manufactures of agricultural implements and castings. In its day, the Barnum Plow was built there, and one of them is on display at the museum in the Fittro Shop. It was acquired and donated to the museum by the late Helen Borngraeber of Wilson.

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HISTORIC MARKER FOR THE A. DOUGLAS PEASE FARM, WILSON-BURT ROAD

THE BARNUM FAMILY TREE

The origin of the Barnum family is quite interesting and dates back to 1650 when Thomas Barnum of Danbury, Connecticut, and many of his descendants, attained prominence in New England. Perhaps the most famous was Phineas Taylor Barnum, better known as P. T. Barnum, whose "Greatest Show on Earth" brought fame and fortune to such well-known personalities as "Tom Thumb", "The Seven Sutherland Sisters", and "Buffalo Bill".

P. T. Barnum's grandfather, Ephraem Barnum, who served in the Revolutionary War, was the great grandson of Thomas Barnum of Danbury, and another great grandson was Captain Richard Barnum, who also served in the Revolution with the 16th Connecticut Regiment. Capt. Barnum's grandson, Richard Barnum, was the one who brought the Barnum name to Western New York. In 1808, a Cooper by trade, he walked from Danbury to Monroe County and settled near Penfield, New York. He married Electa Lloyd, and they moved to Brighton, New York, where their homestead later became known as the "Barnum's Terrace". Two sons, Frederick Foster and David Lloyd, received their education in Brighton.

David Lloyd later moved to Wilson where, in 1863, he opened an iron foundry on Wood Street in the Village. He married Elizabeth Dygert and they had eight children. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church; the Village Board; and the Wilson School Board. He was always interested in the welfare of the village. Both he and his wife, Elizabeth, are buried in the Greenwood Cemetery.

David's brother, Frederick Foster Barnum came to Wilson in 1862, and purchased land south of the Village on Wilson-Cambria Road, Lot #5. His son, James, married Alida Wollaber, and they had a son whom they named Frederick Foster Barnum after his grandfather.

Frederick Foster Barnum married Maude Crossman and, from 1936 to 1947, he was Town Highway Superintendent. In 1947 he was elected Town Supervisor and held the position until he died in 1949. He was succeeded by his son, Whitney Bar num, who held the position for 22 years--longer than any other Supervisor. Three others who served a long time were: Victor Berlin, 11 years; Reuben Wilson, 10 years; and Roland Singer, 7 years.

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GREENWOOD CEMETERY PROGRESS

Anyone driving by or visiting Greenwood Cemetery in Wilson may notice that many improvements have been made to beautify the premises. Much credit for the face lifting job should be given to the Greenwood Cemetery Advisory Committee, with Barbara Mosher as Chairman.

Memorial trees have been planted in memory of loved ones; an attractive rail fence has been erected along the front of the premises, and in the Spring hundreds of bright daffodils accentuate it in keeping with Niagara County's Festival of Gold program.

Another popular project started by the committee is the Christmas Wreath program which allows people to purchase pretty pine wreaths with red bows which are placed on stands next to the graves of participating families. Wreaths are available for $25 each, and they are put in place, and taken down in the Spring by the committee.

The recent installation of attractive lane signs permit people to more easily locate burial sites and , thanks to the Wilson Lions Club, a wood box will be placed near the entranceway with maps of the grounds.

Water lines are strategically placed around the cemetery making it easier for people to water plants and shrubs, and trash barrels are conveniently located so that everyone can help keep the grounds beautiful and free of debris.

We need but go back to the early days of the Cemetery Association to discover that conditions in the old burial site were not always the best. In fact, in 1894 a Canadian reporter on the boat, "Garden City", which made two trips daily between Toronto and Wilson, wrote an item for the "Toronto Journal" on which he described various attractions in the resort Town of Wilson. Among his notations was the comment that "Greenwood Cemetery was not kept up as well as it might have been", and the dry observation that " It might look better if they just turned it over to a flock of sheep".

The Greenwood Cemetery first came into existence on October 28, 1850 when, at a meeting held on the lower floor of the old Seminary, citizens of the Town approved a motion by H. B. Tabor to accept a parcel of land from Luther Wilson and form the Wilson Cemetery Association. The cemetery was enclosed with a white board fence, and an arch over the entrance had "Greenwood" on it. Committees were appointed to paint, repair fences, trim trees, and take care of paths, driveways, and under this arrangement the cemetery was cared for until the early 1900's. .

On July 2, 1923, the Association was reorganized and incorporated, but because of rising costs and inadequate financing, it was impossible to maintain the graves or grounds properly. In 1957, the residents voted in a general election to place the cemetery under the care of the Town of Wilson. In 1982 Harold Mosher, Town Supervisor, appointed the Cemetery Advisory Committee and the results have been outstanding. In 1996, thanks to Clark's Riggers and members of the Lions Club, a new Greenwood Cemetery sign was put in place over the entrance way.

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Wilson Sketchbook II Subject Index

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Wilson Sketchbook II Everyname Index

Asterisk (*) indicates photograph on that page