



The Backbone

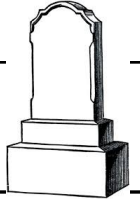
A publication of the Backbone Ridge History Group of Schuyler and Seneca Counties

BECAUSE HISTORY MATTERS

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

BY

MARSHA E. SMITH



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As a child, my family would gather with my grandmother, aunt and uncle, and cousins to go to the Hector Union Cemetery to place flowers on our family graves on Memorial Day. It was a big event and my cousins and I would walk around the old cemetery and look at markers. We would make note of when people were born and died and we were especially saddened when we found children's graves. As a family historian, local history researcher, and a nurse, I have retained this fascination and curiosity. Sparked by this curiosity, I have looked through the interment records from Grove Cemetery in Trumansburg, New York. The records were included in **Some Cemeteries of the Between the Lakes Country**, collected by Jessie Howell Finch and others, compiled and edited by Carl W. Fischer and Harriet Jackson Swick and published in 1974. These records include, in many cases, the cause of death.

I wondered if it were really true that people died young in the old days. Was it really true that many women died in child birth? What **did** people die from in the old days? What took the children? While the records do give causes of death in many cases, they do not in every single instance. New York State did not start keeping vital records until about 1880 so there was no official death record. I suspect that the person recording the deaths, early on, got his information from the family. Later, the records are much more complete and the terminology becomes something much more recognizable. I did **not** see the term tuberculosis used until the 1900's. Tuberculosis was called **Consumption** and in some cases it was called **Phthisis**. Other old terms used were **Cholera Infantum**-- which was basically an infectious diarrhea which took many, many children's lives, **Dropsy**-- which is edema or swelling which could be caused by several different problems ranging from heart disease to kidney or liver disease. **Palsy and apoplexy** were terms used for

stroke. Other terms employed were **Erysipelas**, which is caused by streptococcal infections, **Bright's disease** which is a kidney disease, **La Grippe**, or influenza. My father actually used that term. In plowing through the records, these terms made the job even more challenging.

Grove Cemetery was founded in 1847. During the early years, many of the people buried were moved there from other cemeteries. Grove Cemetery is a large active cemetery and families from a fairly large area buried their family members there. This includes many families from The Backbone area of Seneca and Schuyler Counties. The majority of these burials do not include cause of death. Often there is no cause of death listed for infants, especially if they died within a few days of birth. These could be due to a number of things including birth defects, prematurity, birth injuries, failure to thrive, blood incompatibilities, hypoglycemia, and of course sepsis or infection. I have looked at the burials during the first year, 1847 and then I broke things up into 30 year intervals, from 1848 until 1878 and from 1879 until 1909. At this point, I elected to look at the last two years of interments, 1928 and 1929. I have divided the deaths into two categories: childhood deaths below the age of 19 and adult deaths which ranged in age from 19 to 106 years.

The First Year: 1847

The earliest death recorded occurred in 1810. As aforementioned, the majority of these burials came from other cemeteries.

Total burials: 147

Childhood deaths occurring before the age of 19 = 76 (52% of total number of deaths recorded)

Age: Birth to 2 years = 48

3 years to 10 years = 19

11 years to 18 years = 9

Children aged 2 and below comprised of 63% of all childhood deaths and 32% of total number of deaths recorded)

Deaths occurring at 19 or older = 70. The average age at death was 42 years.

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PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

BY ALLAN BUDDLE

Good to visit with you again! As we approach the end of one year and the beginning of a new one, it seems the right time to thank so many people who have helped make this year a success. You all know who you are. However, I want to especially thank Marci Van Der Heide, Dustin Conklin and Robert (Pete) Simpson, all trustees who have contributed in many ways to the success of the Backbone Ridge History Group. Other life activities have consumed evermore of their time and they felt it important to free up their trustee positions for others. Again, we thank each for their significant contributions.



At the same time we welcome three individuals who were elected to trustee positions at the Annual Membership Meeting in October. Please meet Amber Rose Murray, Jack Murray and Kelly Paonessa Terry. You will be hearing from them in several ways as we move into the new year. Amber is creating an historical grape farming exhibit for circulation among the wineries and other public places. Jack is our new webmaster and is setting up a forum and other new features on the website. Kelly is preparing a history story to be shared with the trail riders who she guides around the forest past the remnants of the old farmsteads on the Backbone. All of these activities reach out to share the ever growing body of information that is being discovered and rediscovered. It tells the story of life on the Backbone from the time when it was first settled around 1800 until it was acquired by the federal government during the Great Depression in the 1930s, a period of about 130 years.

Looking ahead to spring, summer and fall, the trustees have set themes around which programming will be developed. Along with the annual spring cemetery cleanup, restoration and documentation, we hope to recruit a speaker with knowledge of the early grave-stone carvers and conduct a tour of the Reynoldsville Cemetery where work will take place again this spring. The summer program will focus on haymaking the old way. Hay was the primary cash crop for many years on the Backbone farms. If possible there will be some haymaking and handling demonstrations. In the fall, supplementing the grape farming exhibit, plans are underway for a presentation and some demonstrations related to the growing and harvesting of the grapes and their use in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

We would be most pleased if you have and would share suggestions and/or information related to any of these themes and perhaps help with their presentation. If you can help in any way, please contact me at 607 532 4213 or orchardland@zoom-dsl.com or 9176 County Road 142, Interlaken, New York 14847 or contact any of the trustees. Thank you for your continuing support as members. If you wish to have us share the history of the Backbone Ridge and surrounding communities with others, a Gift Membership Application is enclosed.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

CIRCUIT RIDERS ARRIVE IN LIBERTY CORNERS

BY GLYNIS HART

It was 1850 in Liberty Corners this past Sunday- a village long since obscured by the dust of time, although the graves of those who settled and lived there can be found in a quiet, quaint graveyard on County Road 143 in Interlaken. As rain poured down in torrents upon a tent erected in a field, a traveling Methodist preacher exhorted the ranks of people seated on hay bales to Repent and Be Saved.

The "circuit riders" or itinerant preachers of yore, arrived on horseback just as the rain let up. "Reverend Todd," (a.k.a. Mike Kelly, pastor of the Newfield and Reynoldsville United Methodist churches) explained: "On the circuit, sometimes that is the only shower you get!"

"The bishop put me on the back of a horse and said, "Your circuit is only 400 miles- go!" said Reverend Todd. Fully in character, he admonished the "sinners" in the audience, who included some local leading lights: Gerry, Sandy and Mike Reynolds- Covert Town Supervisor- historians Julie Clawson, Georgianna Stevenson, and Walt Gable; and current members of the Smith family (Stephen, Dan and Marilyn), original settlers of Liberty Corners, who had traveled from Washington D.C. to this rededication of this Liberty Corners Chapel and Cemetery.

The event was organized by the Backbone Ridge History Group, whose secretary, Gerry Messmer, spoke about the history of the place, Liberty Corners, a thriving if small place in the 1850s, had a blacksmith shop, a school, a cemetery and a post office. Joseph L. Skinner, Liberty Corners Postmaster, died in 1837 and is buried in the cemetery. Isaiah Smith, a general in the War of 1812, whose name is on the deed of the land Gerry and Millie Messmer now own, is also buried there. Smith married Abner Treman's daughter Ann.

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GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

BY

MARSHA E. SMITH

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Few of these had the cause of death recorded. There were only 10 children who had a cause of death listed and the two main causes of death were cholera infantum or diarrhea and croup or lung infections. There were only 21 adults whose cause of death was listed. These included six deaths from consumption, one death from pneumonia, one death from liver complaint, one death from bilious fever with epilepsy, one accidental death where the unfortunate individual was killed when his horse ran away, one death attributed to diphtheria, one death from "fever," and two deaths from typhoid fever. The next 30 years will tell a far different story.

Years of 1848-1878

These years have a few removals from other cemeteries and, once again, a cause of death was not listed in every instance. The sample size is much larger and paints a more accurate picture.

Total burials: 1263

Childhood deaths occurring before the age of 19 = 429 (34% of total number of deaths recorded)

Age: Birth to 2 years = 224

3 years to 10 years = 129

11 years to 18 years = 76

Children aged 2 and below comprised of 52% of all childhood deaths and 18% of total number of deaths recorded.

Deaths occurring at 19 or older = 834. The average age at death was 53 years.

Causes of Death Among Children

Among the listed causes of death among children, they died chiefly from respiratory illness, diarrhea, and communicable diseases. Once again, the cause of death was listed about only 50% of the time and most of the infant deaths were not listed leading one to believe that the most likely cause of death was related to the birth itself. The major cause of death among children was due to infectious diseases with diphtheria and scarlet fever being the main causes. Children also died in large numbers from consumption. There were only a handful of deaths caused by typhoid fever, unlike the adults. Respiratory illnesses, other than consumption, that resulted in death included congestion or inflammation of the lungs and croup. The leading cause of death among children afflicted with gastro-intestinal illnesses was cholera infantum. Interestingly only eight accidental deaths were recorded: four children drowned, one child died from burns, one child died after being kicked by a horse, one child was struck by lightening (with his grandmother) and one child just died by accident with no cause listed. Among children of today, one of the leading causes of childhood deaths is due to accidents. Two young men below the age of 19 died from wounds received in battle in the Civil War.

Causes of Death Among Adults

Among adults, the overwhelming cause of death was consumption, followed by cardiac disease, strokes, cancer, and typhoid fever. There were only seven maternal deaths listed. Twelve men died during the Civil War due to wounds or chronic disease contracted while in service for their country. Thirteen adults died due to accidents, predominately due to falls. These were typically older men with one man falling from a chestnut tree (not an oak or maple), two men fell off a load of hay, one man fell from a scaffold in a barn, and one man was thrown from his horse. Three people were burned, one man was killed in a collision with rail road cars, one lady was struck by lightening along with her grandchild, one person was killed by snow falling from a roof, one person died from a broken limb, and one person died due to an accident with no cause indicated. There were 12 persons who died of old age and these were predominately people aged 80 or older.

Years of 1879 - 1909

Total burials: 1840

Childhood deaths occurring before the age of 19 = 280 (15% of total number of deaths recorded)

Age: Birth to 2 years = 181

3 years to 10 years = 63

11 years to 18 years = 36

Children aged 2 and below comprised of 15% of all childhood deaths and 10% of total number of deaths recorded.

Deaths occurring at 19 or older = 1560. The average age at death was 58 years.

Causes of Death Among Children

Once again, not all causes of death were recorded for children. Many were young infants and may have died due to circumstances related to their births. Children primarily succumbed to infectious diseases with cholera infantum, diphtheria, and scarlet fever being the chief causes. While scanning the records I could not help to be moved by the fact that often siblings would die within days of each other; families must have been devastated with such loss. Respiratory illness, including consumption, pneumonia, lung congestion, and croup, took many children. There was only a couple of accidental deaths including a child who was burned and another who drowned.

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BY

MARSHA E. SMITH

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Causes of Death Among Adults

As the practice of medicine begins to change, we see more modern terms and more complex diagnoses. Overall the leading cause of death listed was cardiac disease and strokes. This is followed by consumption and then old age. There were many deaths caused by kidney disease or Bright's Disease and typhoid fever as well. We see that the incidence of typhoid fever does decline during this time. There were several accidental deaths with accidents involving men being struck or injured by railroad cars being the leading cause. There were several falls with one person falling over Taughannock Falls. One person was killed in Tennessee and another person was killed in New York City. Two people accidentally shot themselves, three people were killed by horses, and one person was asphyxiated by gas. For the first time, I found death by suicide listed with five persons who killed themselves. I suspect that there were suicides in previous years but due to the fact that the families were likely to be the source of information for cause of death, it was never recorded as such. Five people were poisoned, most often due to drug overdoses. One woman was murdered. Once again, the maternal death rate was much lower than I expected with only six maternal deaths listed.

Years of 1929 and 1930

I am jumping ahead to the final two years of the interment book. There were far too many deaths for me to try to abstract for this article so I decided to look at the last couple of years only to contrast the changes made as peoples' situations changed and the practice of medicine evolved.

Total burials: 149

Childhood deaths occurring before the age of 19 = 8 (5% of total number of deaths recorded)

Age: Birth to 2 years = 5

3 years to 10 years = 3

11 years to 18 years = 0

Children aged 2 and below comprised of 63% of all childhood deaths and 3% of total number of deaths recorded.

Deaths occurring at 19 or older = 141. The average age at death was 67 years.

Seven of the eight children have the cause of death listed, including two stillborn infants, one premature infant, one child with septicemia, one child with uremic coma-- likely some kind of kidney disease, one child with TB, and one child with a congenital heart condition. The leading

cause of death among adults is heart disease, closely followed by stroke. Fourteen people died of some form of cancer and fourteen people died of some form of chronic kidney disease or nephritis. There were nine accidental deaths including five car accidents. Five adults died of diabetes. Two people died of suicide by carbon monoxide asphyxiation. Of interest we see only one death due to TB, when in the past it was one of the highest causes of death among adults.

The patterns of causes of death are much closer to what we would see today. There were no maternal deaths and far, far fewer childhood deaths. Accidents were caused by car wrecks instead of being hit by trains or having a run in with your trusty steed. People were more likely to survive injuries sustained during an accident by this time. Like today, heart disease and strokes were a leading cause of death. With the development of antibiotics and vaccines, deaths due to TB and diseases like typhoid, diphtheria, and tetanus dropped sharply. If you lived in the 19th century you might find the old epitaph to be appropriate:

"Grim Death took me without any warning. I was well at night and died in the morning."

-- Marsha E. Smith

Editors Note: From www.historyofvaccines.org

Photo from The Historical Medical Library of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Information Upon the Subject of the Prevention of Small-Pox, by Vaccination. Eastern Dispensary of the City of New York, 1859

"A physician or other vaccinator used instruments like these to score the flesh on the arm prior to applying the inoculating material to the wound. In the early- and mid-1800s, the material usually came from the vesicle of a previously vaccinated infant. Later, lymph from calves would replace humanized lymph."

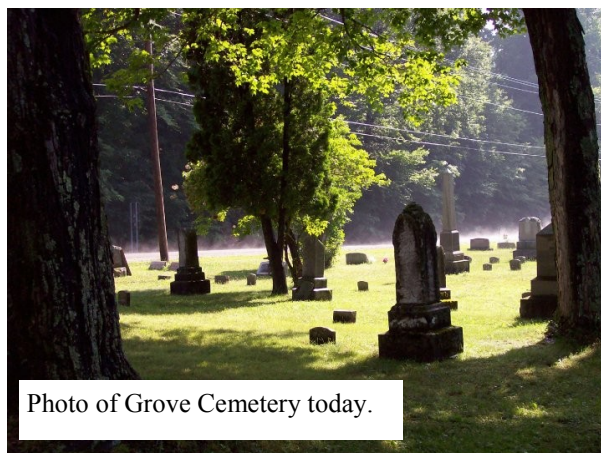
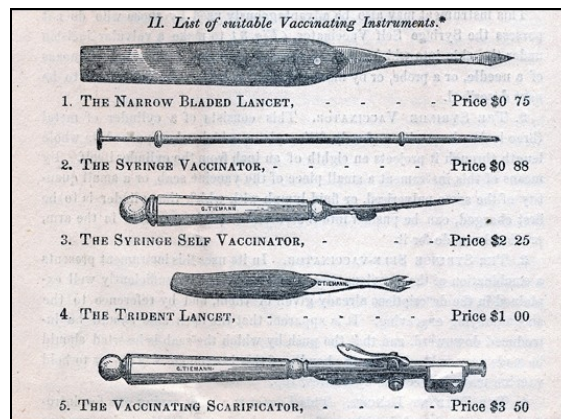


Photo of Grove Cemetery today.



CIRCUIT RIDERS ARRIVE IN LIBERTY CORNERS
BY GLYNIS HART
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

Walt Gable, Seneca County Historian, described Seneca County in the 1850's. The 1850 census gives the population of the county as 22,441, as opposed to 33,000 there today. The county bustled with activity two hundred years ago; in 1855 drain tile was introduced, allowing the fields to be more fertile, and by 1855 there were seven tile producing factories in Waterloo alone said Gable. Flour mills in Seneca Falls produced 85,000 barrels of flour a year reflecting the successful farming of wheat.

"We can see the prospects of the Civil War already," said Gable. There was a lot of Underground Railroad activity, and the abolitionist cause was strong. Wool producers answered to the local market for non-cotton clothing, as many citizens of conscience refused to buy cotton, since to do so supported slavery.

From left to right: Pastor Mike Kelly, Christine McAfee holding Dakota, Pastor Cheryl Hine, Cady Fontana on Buck. The horses were provided by D&K Ranch of Interlaken.



Reverend Cheryl Hine, of the Mecklenburg and Trumansburg United Methodist Churches, dressed in a long black robe as one of the circuit riders, gave a history of the Methodist Church and the circuit riders in particular. John Wesley and his brother Charles had started a movement in response to the increasing ossification of the Church of England, which was "downright stuffy," said Hine. The Wesleys began organizing outdoor revivals held in fields and tents, because many of the rural poor felt intimidated and unwelcome in the grandiose churches. "They were preaching outdoors to the low income people," said Hine. John Wesley went on to organize lay preachers into these traveling circuits. Such preachers would go hundreds of miles, stopping for a few days or a week at each place on their circuits, living rough but bringing the word of God to settled places that often lacked a church, or simply sought a different way to receive the gospel.

The sun was fully out as the assemblage left the tent to tour the cemetery. Along with Isaiah Smith- who wasn't the first Smith on the scene- Charity and John Smith who first settled Liberty Corners in 1803, and several of their descendents are buried there. Lynn Stevenson Fisher presided at the unveiling of the new cemetery marker; Rev. Hine rededicated the chapel(""; the site is marked off, but no building remains) and everyone joined in singing two hymns of the time. It turned out that "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," was written in 1734 by Charles Wesley, with the familiar music added by Felix Mendelssohn in 1840.

The property is currently farmed by the Reynolds family, who graciously allowed this "tent revival" in their field, and who were sitting in the audience being "saved" with all of us other sinners.

Editors Note: This article first appeared in the Interlaken Review on September 24, 2014

MAIL CALL



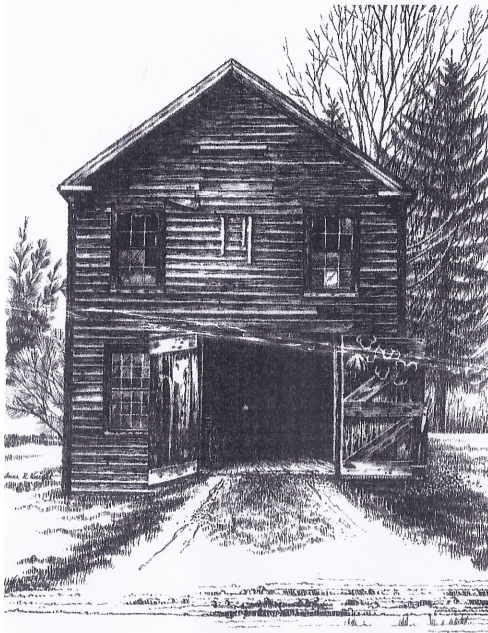
Hello All, I would like to thank the Backbone Ridge History group for being such a positive force in this area in preserving and uncovering history. For the last 10 years I have worked with high school students and traveling the world with them to different countries with the main goal of helping them begin to understand the cultural differences based on the history and beliefs of the people we are visiting. I have always found past generations and civilizations very interesting for many reasons and I believe it is important to preserve and share what we can.

That being said I now currently take small groups of people on guided trail rides in the national forest along with working with Hector Grazing Association, so yes most of my time is spent with my horses in the Finger Lakes National Forest. The location of the forest is now one of my favorite places to be, breathtaking and serene. Over the last few years I have started hearing stories about old foundations that are in the different cattle pastures which has inspired me to want to learn and understand more about the communities that once lived here. As we ride on the trails through the forest I can point out what I know about the different areas of the forest and where people lived and it seems that most of my riders find this as interesting as I do. So my goal for the winter and spring is to read as much as I can about the communities and hopefully put something together that is factual about how life might have been here and who the people were and how they might have lived. Again with my goal in mind that understanding different societies and past generations through preservation will help cultural awareness and understanding ourselves.

Respectfully, Kelly Terry

MYSTERY PHOTO'S

Do you know what and where this building once stood?



The Summer Issue of the Backbone displayed a photo of a small white building with green trim partially hidden by trees. Along with the photo was the question- Was this building a feed store, a telephone office, a pharmacy, a real estate office or a law office. If you answered yes to all of the possibilities you would have been correct. The most recent use was as the Charles Jennings Law Office. A year ago Amy Pemberton, daughter of the late Charles Jennings, donated the building to the Backbone Ridge History Group. Although some delayed maintenance and some repairs are needed before being put back into use, the building is now designated the Backbone Ridge History Research Center. Documents relating to the Backbone Ridge area and surrounding small communities are being collected, indexed and will be available in one place for anyone interested in researching families, businesses and community organizations related to the Backbone Ridge. Most of these documents are copies since donors are encouraged to place original documents with the appropriate town historian or historical society. If anyone would like to volunteer his or her time to help prepare the building for its next use, please contact Gerry Messmer at 607 387-9669 or mandg9669@zoom-dsl.com.

OUR NEIGHBORS

PEN SKETCHES FROM THE BORDER LINE OF TOMPKINS AND SCHUYLER COUNTIES- 1889 PERRY CITY

CONTRIBUTED BY SARAH DELAHANTY

It may be a wise providence that located the only city in Schuyler County upon the extreme eastern edge of the Town of Hector, otherwise this extensive commonwealth over which Supervisor Stilwell has dominion might become overbalanced by the increased population and growing towns on the west side, tip up and slide all Hector into the cold waters of Seneca Lake. But with a good solid city to hold down the east side, the Hectorites pasture their flocks and herds (sic) on a thousand hills without uneasiness and wax fat and wealthy in this land of milk and honey.

Like the Capital of our Country, Perry is a city of magnificent distances, and though not claiming a large a population as some other cities of the Empire State, is not envious, but is content with the knowledge that she has ample room for as large and dense a population as any of them.

On entering the city of the plain so pleasantly situated on the sunny side of the foothills, the stranger cannot but observe the neat appearance of the houses and their surroundings, the most of which are owned by their occupants, and one naturally thinks the

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OUR NEIGHBORS

Pen Sketches from the Border Line of Tompkins and Schuyler Counties- 1889

PERRY CITY

CONTRIBUTED BY SARAH DELAHANTY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

the villagers are possessed of more than average intelligence and thrifts. This impression is confirmed when you come to converse with the people, for there are few villages where the inhabitants are so well informed on general topics and current events of the day as this.

Residing here are several men of letters, among them whom are two resident ministers, one temperance advocate, one phrenological platform orator, and other prominent citizens who can talk well on almost any subject.

With the exception of the Friends meeting house, which of late years is only used on state occasions, there is no house of public worship, there is preaching in the hall almost every Sabbath, being supplied alternate Sundays by the Baptist clergyman from Trumansburg. Weaver's hall is also used for lectures, concerts and other public meetings.

The Good Templers have a prosperous lodge of about 80 members which was organized last spring and meets Saturday evenings. The school building is on Maple Avenue and is a convenient and well finished structure surrounded by a grove of beautiful maples, showing the thoughtful care and good taste of the patrons of the school. Prof. Titus, of Newfield, has charge of this institution at present.

At the corner store may be seen the genial countenances of the gentlemanly proprietor John Strowbridge. Here you can buy almost anything in the way of dry goods, groceries, hardware and footwear, at prices so low as to really astonish those who come from cities of a larger growth. By years of patient industry and fair dealing Mr. Strowbridge has gained the confidence of a large and steady patronage.

Just across the street is E. M. Davey's boot and shoe shop. He is on hand early and late except perhaps an occasional day off to come to town and see a balloon accession. Mr. Davey has followed his trade for many years and is a good workman.

On the other corner is the blacksmith shop of W. H. Lovell, who probably does more and better work than any one in that line between the lakes. He is assisted by S. Bryant who just knows how to make things.

Over the way are the shops of Elisha Weaver the wagon man, and A. W. Allen the furniture man, and both do a rushing business. Mr. Weaver also keeps a livery stable.

Down water street lives Daniel Philbrick, the postmaster who has held the position for 12 years regardless of change in political administrations. Mr. Philbrick is one of the oldest inhabitants, having resided here over half a century.

Next door is Judge Swartwont's office where you can sign your papers and swear without fear and with hope of reward. Mr. S. is also pension attorney.

On south Main street is the glove and mitten factory of Harrison Hatfield, whose goods are too well known to need mention. He also keeps a stock of groceries and while fitting you out with the necessities of life is usually willing to furnish any required information on religious or political subjects without extra charge.

At the south end of Main street stands Hoag Bros. crate factory, cider and jelly works operated by steam power. Connected with that, they have all the necessary apparatus for the successful manufacture of molasses from Amber cane, and some seasons have made as high as 2,000 gallons. So farmers need not fear putting in a patch of sorghum for lack of a place to have it manufactured. Mr. M. E. Hoag also holds the patent on nesting vegetable and fruit crates. On north main street are the offices of Thomas & Williams, architects and builders who are prepared to execute orders in the way of general carpenter work.

Here also is Hoag & Billings basket factory from which large quantities of fruit baskets are shipped weekly during the season.

Two miles direct west is the steam saw and planing (sic) mill of Jas. Patterson. Besides doing regular custom work of all kinds, Mr. Patterson does a large business in the manufacture of shingles, basket materials, crate slats, barrel staves and heading, bridge timber and plank. He is now having made a heavy delivery wagon with 4 inch tires, which will carry the heavy loads he is called upon to deliver without cutting up the roads.

The strawberry farm of John Rossiter must also be mentioned. It is situated down Elbow Avenue and is last spoken of because John is so modest that he would blush to see his name in print until after he had seen those of some of his neighbors.



Editors Note: This article first appeared in The Sentinel, Trumansburg, New York Wednesday, October 30, 1889.



Backbone Ridge History Group
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Trustees:

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Trustee meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the third Wednesday of each month at the Backbone Ridge History Research Center at the intersection of Route 96A and SR 414 in the Village of Lodi.

WWW.BACKBONERIDGEHISTORYGROUP.COM

**For new and renewal memberships, please send \$10 to Membership Chair, Rose Smith,
at PO Box 64, Trumansburg, NY 14886.**

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