



A Bicentennial Tribute

Issue II • Summer 2007

NELSON'S BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS CONTINUE

On August 7, 2007, 200 years to the day, a commemoration ceremony was held at the site of the first Town of Nelson meeting. A large granite rock and plaque mark the spot at the Rufus Weaver barn, now owned by Brian Enders, at the corner of Old State Road and Erieville Road. The day was blustery with the temperature in the low 30s challenging the stamina of the 60 or so people assembled there. Glenys Williams read a greeting in Welsh and English but the weather shortened the speeches given by Fay Lyon, Town Historian; Bill Magee, State Assemblyman and Dick Williams, Town Supervisor. The meeting was adjourned to the warmth of the Town Office Building where an early poster of Lord Nelson, after whom the town was named, was introduced to the audience by Kevin Davies. All enjoyed the Welsh cookies and other treats which followed.

The second and highly successful Bicentennial event was held on June 2, 2007. A bus tour was arranged to visit eight of Nelson's farms. The tour included: the Coursen family's horse boarding farm "Pheasant Hollow"; Brian and Jennifer Marti's "Apple Ridge Alpacas"; the Herefords owned by the Charlie Davis family at "Hawknest Farm"; James and Sarah Huftalen's organic dairy; the Fred and Steve Westfall dairy farm; "Cazabu Farms" where Quarter Horses and Nokotas are raised by Rick and Leigh Garber; John Madden Sales, Inc., the home of Olympic Champion Bezie Madden and "Two Hearts Farm" which raises cattle, sheep and chickens and is owned by John and Lisa Kirby and family. A fine lunch was provided by the Erieville Methodist Church.

An ice cream social was held on June 22, 2007 at the Erieville Ball Field. Braving the cold and windy weather, Nelson and Erieville residents and their guests enjoyed ice cream sundaes and old-fashioned root beer floats while being entertained by Robin Schade, New York's Troubadour. Ice cream was supplied by Kimberley's Ice Cream Factory, Inc.

Raffle tickets for the bicentennial quilt and Town of Nelson t-shirts are still available from Chris Westcott at the town office building. There are more events to come. A town picnic with food and games will be held on July 21 from 12 to 5 at the "Woody" Woodworth Memorial Ball field in Nelson. In August, the play "The John Buck Murder Trial" by Don Edwards will be presented in the Nelson Methodist Church. That evening's entertainment will also include music by the Nelson Quartet which is made up of any number of members. The drawing of the winner of the bicentennial quilt will also take place at this time. In October, the bicentennial celebrations will wind down with a display and presentation at the Cazenovia Public Library. Everyone is welcome as we continue to celebrate this important year in Nelson's history.



Photo courtesy of Denise Earl



Photo courtesy of Denise Earl



Photo courtesy of Denise Earl

Nelson Methodist Church Ice Cream Social August 8, 1941 from Adelia Lyon's notebook	
Homemade Ice Cream (7 gallons) made from:	
3 dozen eggs	
22 quarts milk	
12 lbs sugar	
Cakes 6 - solicited from members	
Expenses:	
8 lbs bananas	.50
1 pint cream	.25
6 lbs peaches	.35
Nuts	.30
Sugar	.10
Napkins	.10
Cards	\$2.10
Total	
Prices to customers	20¢
Banana Splits	15¢
Sundaes	10¢
Ice Cream and Cake	10¢

Took in \$1785
Expenses 210
Cleared \$1575
A good day.



Issue 2 of "A Bicentennial Tribute" will again be available at Kay's Store, Nelson Farms, Brookside Greenhouses and the Nelson Town Office Building.



A LETTER TO THE EDITOR, APRIL 10, 2007

Dear Dorene,

On page 15 of the first issue of the *Bicentennial Tribute*, you asked if I enjoyed the journey down memory lane. Absolutely! I wasn't born in Nelson, nor do I live there now, but in many ways Nelson will always be my "home".

My Mother and Step-Father moved into the Town of Nelson in 1974 eight days after my 9th birthday. I soon learned that "our" house had been Mrs. Moseley's house a few years before. "Mrs., Moseley! That's the name of the street!" I exclaimed. Wow. To have a street named after you! These must be pretty important people, I thought. I loved the house; I still do. I grew up there and my Mother, Joyce Fisher, still lives there.

A few years later, I learned that my math teacher, Mr. Davis used to spend lots of time in "our" house. The house used to belong to his grandparents. Mr. Davis told me that the ramp to our barn was built by local prisoners because Mr. Davis' grandfather, Mr. Tim Thomas, was the sheriff. I never found out if that was true, but it had the effect of making me pay attention in math class.

One of my best childhood friends was Mike Costello, Frank's son. I spent many evenings at the Nelson Inn. I helped my Mother and Step-Father farm land owned by Mr. and Mrs. Sadoff on Putnam Road. I baled hay while other kids spent the hot summer days at the lake. I lived next door to Sharon and Don Driscoll and babysat countless hours in their home, one of Nelson's first school houses.

As a new teacher in Hamilton, I rented a little cabin on Erieville Reservoir. I would come home to my cabin and row my rowboat

over to Rosie's for dinner many evenings. I taught at SUNY Morrisville for a few years and became friends with Vera Littlejohn, onetime owner of the stone school house on Old State Road. This friendship drew my attention to Merrill Bailey's art work and made me feel even more connected to the area.

When David Penoyer became the Town Judge, I remembered him from my days as an 8th grader at Cazenovia High School. I thought that if I ever got into trouble in Nelson, I might have an advantage in knowing the Judge, but I might also run the risk of having disappointed a neighbor. Luckily, I never had to appear in his court.

I remember one assignment I had in 7th grade. I had to interview a local resident who knew lots about local history. I "interviewed" the man who was referred to as "Grandpa Lyon" (Merritt Lyon Sr.), Fay's grandfather. He was well over 80 at that time and was, as they say, "sharp as a tack." I didn't appreciate how valuable a source of history he really was. I do now.

One of my family names is Flewellin (pretty Welsh). I began to take a real interest in the Welsh – partly because Nelson seemed to be so dominated by Welsh heritage. One necessary experience was to attend the Welsh Church during the summer. I have tried to make it to at least one service every summer since that first visit many summers ago.

A few years ago, I decided to buy a piece of land on Eatonbrook Reservoir, the Nelson side. I am lucky enough to own a piece of the former Boy Scout property. My hope is to one day make this 1940s cabin a more sturdy residence, perhaps even year round but never bigger than the 12' X 12' that it is now.

Yes, I enjoyed the trip down memory lane. And I know there will be many more happy memories to come! Nelson is a great place to live, play, work and call home.

David Vickers

MEETING THE NEEDS: EARLY INDUSTRIES IN NELSON

By Marge Lyon

The early industries developed around the needs of the settlers: sawmills, asheries, grist mills, tanneries and the manufacturing of wool cloth which included carding and fulling.

The earliest industry was the making of potash which was basically the consequence of burning the forests. Our area was all woodlands, and hardwoods made great potash. The settlers burned the hardwoods and sold the ash, which helped pay for their land. Asheries, where ashes were heated in water and boiled down into potash or pearlash were often located next to stores where farmers could trade the ashes for goods. Nathaniel Hotchkin and Alpheus Morse had a store, ashery and foundry in Erieville. Nicholas Jenks had an ashery on lot 52 just off Lyon Road.

Lumber was needed to make the first dwellings and barns. Sawmills developed along the many streams. The first sawmill was started in 1798 by Sylvanus and George Sayles two miles south of Nelson Flats. When the first lots were sold, this site was donated to anyone who would build a mill. Oliver Pool had a mill just north of Erieville as did Jeremiah Clark in the same vicinity. Some histories say Clark had the first sawmill. James Tinsler had a sawmill west of Erieville.

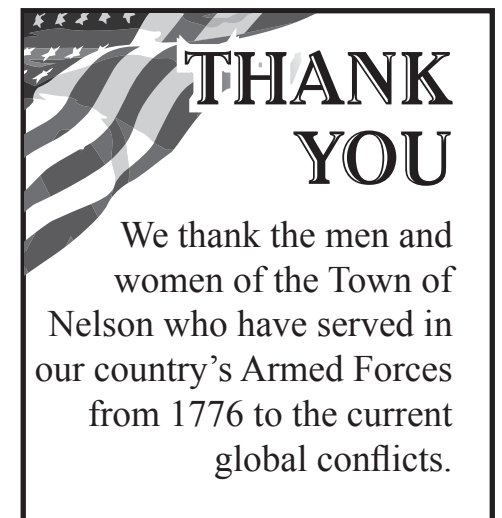
Soon farming developed and sheep outnumbered every animal in the early census. Getting wool ready to be made into cloth was very time consuming. Carding machines replaced the tedious hand labor required to clean and straighten the raw woolen fibers in preparation for spinning. After weaving the fabric, it was processed at the fulling mill. The fabric was put in a tub with soap and water and beaten for many hours to get out the oils and tighten the weave; water power was used. After drying, the fabric was ready to be made into clothes. The early state census always had each settler report the amount of fabric he had. In 1835, 3,417 yards of fulled fabric were reported from three fulling mills.

Grain was grown for food and for sale. Until a grist mill was built in Nelson, a mill for grinding was a good day's ride away. James Annas built a small mill one and a half miles north of Erieville. Some said the stones were brought from Vermont. In 1824, there were two gristmills in the town of Nelson.

Tannin was another long arduous process. In 1824, there were two tanneries in Nelson. Hemlock bark was used to make the tanning fluid, a different strength for different colors. After sitting in the vats for days, the tanner scraped and softened the hides and dried them. They were then ready for shoes, hats, harnesses and many other uses.

As farming developed and the farmer had more money and goods to trade, more businesses developed. Of course, most people were engaged in farming or farm labor but businesses continued to grow in the villages. The 1850 census gives us a picture: There were masons, merchants, wagonmakers, drovers, stage drivers, harnessmakers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, millers, painters, carpenters, tanners, tavern keepers, saliatu manufacturers, coopers, doctors and even a sculptor.

As the generations came and went, businesses grew or faded in tune to the needs of the people and their growing ability to buy manufactured goods.



Special Thanks to
Rich Hackney and
Caz Cartage
Trash Collection & Hauling
655-2540

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

This is the second issue of "A Bicentennial Tribute" and the final issue. We hope that Nelson residents have enjoyed learning about the history of the town and reading the personal remembrances of their neighbors. We want to thank everyone who has shared with us some of their memories. As for the town history, needless to say there are still lots of topics which we were not able to cover. We are leaving that for future researchers and writers. We encourage anyone interested to attend the meetings of the Erieville-Nelson Heritage Society and to visit the town archives.

There are many people to be thanked in addition to those mentioned in the first paper: Brian Enders, Mary and Lee DuSell, Bruce Bailey, Rita and David Penoyer, Reg and Leta Card, Jim Dowd, Doug Trush, Jim Georges, Carl Stearns, Margaret Davis, David Vickers, Brenda Bailey Picht, Pauline Brown, Beverly and Jim Buck, Ray and Rosemary Lyon, Jennifer Meicht, Abbie Bobette Redmond, Fred Westfall, William Parker, Kay Parker Rosenberg, Sue Hamilton Patten, Ann Hamilton DuPree, Betty McEvers, Opal Meade, Marge Lyon, Ron Davies, and Sonia Hull Davies. I would

also like to acknowledge my Mother, Adelia Lyon; she kept scrapbooks from 1939 until her death in 1997. They are a wonderful source of information as are her notebooks.

This paper was printed by the Scotsman Press and I especially want to thank Linda Brown of the Commercial Printing Department and Debbie Smith, Designer. Their knowledge of publishing and design, and their patience and consideration are greatly appreciated.

Once again, thanks to the members of the Bicentennial Committee for their unflagging enthusiasm and hard work. Finally,

I would like to thank Town Historian, Fay Lyon, and the Erieville-Nelson Heritage society for giving me this opportunity to renew old acquaintances and meet new ones in my capacity as editor of this paper.

Please join us for the remainder of the Bicentennial celebrations in 2007.

Dorene Lyon Setliff, Editor

CHEESE MAKING IN THE TOWN OF NELSON

by Denise Earl and Dorene Lyon Setliff

Cheese making was originally a function of the home. However, machinery which became available after the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century changed that. The first factory for the industrial production of cheese opened in Switzerland in 1815. Credit for the first assembly line manufacture usually goes to Jesse Williams, a dairy farmer from Rome, NY, who, in 1851 used milk from neighboring farms to produce the product. Within decades, hundreds of such dairy associations were formed. Cheese manufacture became extensive with factories in nearly every community by 1870.

In the *Erieville-Nelson Patriot* (April 1976), local farmer Leon Hudson remembered that, prior to 1910, there were "cheese factories every few miles" in the Erieville area. This was necessary because farmers could not transport their milk over long distances. Butter, cottage cheese and cheddar cheese were made.

According to East Nelson resident, David Jones, who wrote about the cheese factories of East Nelson in *A Note On the Tractor*, William Richards built and operated numerous cheese factories in the town at one time: "One such factory was located on the Hughes Road. There was also one on the Old State Road at the intersection with Jones Road. William Richards sold it to the Paramount Cheese Company. It was sort of a co-op as all the farmers had an interest in it. Milk was delivered in the old large milk cans. In the summer the milk was delivered after the morning milking as well as after the evening milking. Most of the men would stay and visit far into the evening. The young boys would play together and the older ones usually would find out who was the best wrestler.

The nearest Post Office was at Nelson Flats (Skunk Hollow). Once a week someone would go to Nelson and get the neighborhood

mail and bring it to the cheese factory where it was passed out to each family. John P Davis was the cheese maker for many years. He also passed out the mail and hard candy and tobacco. He was known far and wide as an excellent cheese maker. He was also a very particular man to see that the cheese was kept clean from the beginning to the end."

The large Erieville Creamery was built in 1895 by Charles Maynard, a leading businessman and member of the State Assembly. "In 1897, the creamery handled almost 4,000,000 lbs of milk making 324,435 lbs of cheese, 22,592 lbs of butter and shipping (via railroad) to the New York market, 4,622 forty quart cans of milk" (John E. Smith, ed. *Our County and Its People*, Boston History Company, 1899). Erieville was at that time an important milk shipping point.

The cheese factory in Nelson, located on the east side of Nelson Road just on the edge of the village, was also one of the most successful. According to an article in the *Cazenovia Republican* (December 28, 1950), the Nelson Cheese Factory, originally owned by Alanson Gaige, was built in 1870 and operated as a pattern works. In 1876, William Richards purchased the building and it became a cheese factory. Among later owners were Edgar Beebe who returned to pattern making and Duane Histed who once again made cheese. Around 1940, a Utica man, Charles Braveman, purchased the factory. Eunice Stamm writes in her book *The History of Cheese Making in New York State* (The Lewis Group Ltd, Endicott, NY, 1991): "The creamery at Nelson set a world's record for Cheddar production in 1941 when a big milk strike sent individual dairymen to the creamery with their milk. Privately owned vehicles lined up for a quarter mile, unloading 2 million pounds of milk during the strike in addition to regular deliveries



Erieville Creamery Built By Charles Maynard

by the Empire Milk Trucking Company. ...Fifty-one employees kept fifteen vats in operation twenty-four hours a day and, under the management of Oskar Schlappi, 3.5 million pounds of Cheddar cheese were produced there that year. ...Much of this product was American hard cheese, a variety especially suitable for processing. As a major purchaser, James Kraft visited Nelson for first hand knowledge of the operation. Nelson employees also made processed cheese, using their own cheddar and aged Provolone to produce a popular blend that was sold to large meat and cheese packers."

The *Cazenovia Republican* (Dec. 28, 1950) stated that in the early 1940s, "500-600 cheeses weighing 40 pounds each were made at the plant every day, most of it being shipped lend-lease. It had the greatest volume of any plant in the country making that type of cheese."

By 1950, the factory was working on a part time basis only and even this came to an end when in late Dec 1950, the factory burned to the ground at a loss of \$70,000. Firemen from Cazenovia, Morrisville, West Eaton, Eaton and Hamilton were unable to save the building.

MRS. WHITNAL'S SACRED EGG

"Erieville Excited over a Supposed Miracle: The Coming of Christ in 1884 Thought to Have Been Predicted by a Strange Hen - How the Miracle was Exposed and Quiet Restored."

Cazenovia Republican, Aug. 2, 1883
Contributed by Jim Georges

"Last Tuesday, Mrs. Whitnal, the estimable wife of a harness maker in Erieville, Madison County, heard her favorite hen cackling in the barn in a strange and unprecedented manner. Upon reaching the nest she found an egg of ordinary size but emblazoned with raised characters, which nearly caused her to faint. Staggering from the barn into the house, she displayed the hen's miraculous product to her sons and daughters, some of whom rushed out and spread the alarm among the populace. All further work on that day was suspended. Men working in the fields put up their horses and tools in the barn after which they congregated in Griffin's hotel and gazed anxiously at the Whitnal residence diagonally across the road. The excitement was intensified

when the report was confirmed that Samuel Curtis, an honored shoe maker and brother of Mrs. Whitnal, had become so unnerved at the sight of the egg that he had taken to his bed in alarm and refused to be comforted. Meanwhile Mrs. Whitnal went from house to house, telling the inhabitants to commence immediate preparation for the coming of the Lord in 1884. One Methodist sister suggested the expediency of assembling all the people in the church for an all night service of prayer. Another sister said she had known it all the while as the Lord had told her so a few nights before in a dream. Other women got out their bibles and hymn books and called the passersby to repent of their sins and be saved. The news spread rapidly into the country and for miles around excited farmers hitched up their horses and drove to town.

"The most skeptical were convinced of the

sacred egg's genuineness when it was taken to the hotel and exhibited by two of Mr. Whitnal's sons. On one side stood out boldly the figures '1884'. On another side was a cross, and on a third side was a strange symbol, which some thought was a letter 'C' while others thought it was a half moon. . . . It was clear that the characters had been traced upon the egg by no pen or pencil. No coloring matter had been used. The characters were simply raised upon the shell, as if they had been . . . puffed out by some interior agency. The universal interpretation put upon the egg in its entirety was that it foretold the advent of Christ in the year designated.

"On that night the morals and manners of the village of Erieville were excellent beyond parallel. New resolutions were formed and bad habits were sworn off. Mrs. Whitnal's household was too excited

to sleep. Her daughter, Sarah, was quite ill and it was feared that the sacred egg would tend greatly to shorten her life. Alarmed at this, Frank Richardson, a clerk in the post office, acknowledged that the miracle had been performed through his instrumentality. He explained that to get even with one of Mr. Whitnal's sons, he traced the characters on the egg with tallow and then placed it in vinegar. After the acid had eaten the shell as to allow the parts traced with tallow to become prominent, he visited the Whitnal barn, deposited the egg in a nest, scared an innocent hen and decamped. Mr. Richardson's exposé has had the unfortunate effect of dispelling the moral influence exerted by the egg. The villagers have returned to their former ways."

SLABSIDES INN AND LIFE IN ERIEVILLE IN THE 1930s AND 1940s



Slabsides Inn 1955

by Chris Westcott and David Penoyer with additional information courtesy of Reg Card

In a long ago day, when Erieville was the place where the action was, the center of activity for many was Slabsides Inn at the foot of one of Central New York's most appealing attractions, the waters of Erieville Reservoir, i.e. Tuscarora Lake. Slabsides was located on the southern shore of the Reservoir where Tuscarora Road leaves Erieville Road. Reg Card tells us that the first Slabsides, which actually was sided with slabs of wood, burned in 1937 and was rebuilt. The rebuilt Slabsides was a larger building with a large dancehall, dining room, etc. and an extension which went over the water. This extension was removed in the 40s when the State realized that permission had not been granted for such a structure. The Inn eventually fell into disrepair (and disrepute) and was torn down in the early 1980s.

In the late 1930s to mid 1940s, Slabsides was owned and operated by Fred and Esther Kirsh. They lived there full time with their two daughters, Doris and Barbara. Dinners and ice cream were served. There were five rooms upstairs, three of which were occupied by the owners and their daughters and two

were rented out to guests for the weekend or by the week. Downstairs in the front of the building were three living rooms that could be used for relaxing or socializing. There was a huge stone fireplace on the first floor also. In the basement was a big kitchen used for preparing large quantities of food for picnics, family reunions and parties. In the dining room, a jukebox stood by the wall by the parking lot.

Later, Clive and Alice Gregg, Bub and Helen Barber and Otwell and Lucy Bobbette owned Slabsides. Chris' Mother, Elise Odell, cooked dinner there seven days a week. Mrs. Bobbette did the lunch hour cooking. The Inn had several owners over the years. In later years, Helen Streeter and her sons owned it.

Slabsides was the place to go on Saturday nights for good old fashioned dancing: round and square dances, polkas, etc. A different band played every Saturday night unless one band drew a larger crowd than the others. Chris remembers going down on a Saturday night to help in the kitchen and hearing the band playing.

Chris also remembers from her childhood, a local man, Dell Digney, who often visited Slabsides. Chris and her friends would congregate on the corner of Erieville and Tuscarora Roads and Dell would bring out a pint container of ice cream for each of the youngsters. Dell apparently was a well-known local character. At one time, he was seen sitting in the back seat of a Cadillac convertible with a rope in his hand, leading a cow up the concrete strip of Route 92N in Oran!

As the years went by, the character of Slabsides Inn changed. The clientele was no longer mainly local people and it finally closed in the late 1970s. A private residence was built on the old Slabsides location at the end of the lake.

LIFE ON JONES ROAD

by Marilyn Jones Beard

Growing up on a farm in the '40s and '50s was an idyllic time for me. I had the warmth and security of a large family which included my grandparents, Bert and Sarah Jones, my Aunt Elizabeth (Jones), my Mom and Dad, Bea and Dave Jones, and older sister, Wilma. I was all of two-weeks-old in 1945 when Mom and Dad moved from Utica to Jones Road to take over the farm which had been in the family since 1877.

As farmers know, Mother Nature rules the roost when it comes to farming. My Dad seemed to take it all in stride. Too much rain, not enough rain, too much snow, or the other tricks of Mother Nature never seemed to frustrate him.

One of the great things about living on a farm was that Dad and Mom were always there. Mom was not employed outside the home, but she sure did work hard at home. She did everything so easily that I didn't realize all she did until I had a family of my own.

Mom loved to bake (and still does) and passed that love on to me. She was always baking something. One of her specialties is crescent yeast rolls which she still makes frequently. She gets up at 5 am to start them, saying they turn out better when they are made early in the morning.

Winter was often long with snow starting in November and not quitting until April or even May. The deep snow made it even harder for Dad to do some of the chores that go along with dairy farming and it was frustrating when the milk truck couldn't make the snow blocked road. I can remember the sad times that milk had to be dumped.

The farm is on the top of a hill with a winding road. I can remember riding home with my Aunt Elizabeth on a winter's day. Just before she got a running start to go up the hill, she'd tell my sister and me to "cross your fingers and your toes" and off we would go "flying" up the hill swerving all the way – but we made it.

My sister and I spent a lot of time outside skating on my Uncle Evan's pond (of course we had to shovel it off first), sledding, tobogganing, and playing Fox and Geese. Mom always had hot chocolate waiting for us when we came in the house to warm up. Sometimes we'd go to the barn while Dad was milking the cows, sit on bales of hay and play card games.

Spring brought mud, mud, and more mud. And once that dried up it was time to pick stone to make the fields ready for planting. That was not my favorite task! Fixing fence and plugging woodchuck holes were other jobs that had to be done. You knew the weather was getting warm when you heard the first peepers at night, and saw the crocus, daffodils, and tulips starting to peek through the ground as the last of the snow banks in the woods disappeared. In May the apple blossoms, flowers in the woods, and lilacs said that spring had really arrived.

Once summer arrived, school was finished

for the year and farm work got busier. Getting the hay in took precedence. The weather played a huge part in determining how long it took and the quality of the hay. My Mom, Sister, and I helped my Dad as much as we could, but he still had to do the hardest part. Rain, drought, and broken balers were all part of the game. But finally the night would come when Dad announced the haying was done; we piled in the car and headed to Cazenovia for a banana split at Marr's Dairy Bar to celebrate. Ah, the simple joys of farm life!

August brought the 4-H Round-Up and the State Fair. My sister and I entered cattle, chicken, vegetables, baking, and sewing for judging. One August a hurricane decided to disrupt everything by dumping lots of rain on our area. My sister was entering her prize jersey and had to wear white pants. My mother washed them, but couldn't dry them because of the rain, so after unsuccessfully trying to dry them in the oven, she finally called the only neighbor who had a dryer to ask to use it. And to this day I can still see my mom washing the prize chickens' feet in the kitchen in preparation for the Round-Up.

Fall meant harvesting everything before cold weather set in. One early October when I was in high school, it snowed so much in the night my aunt was unable to get to school. Dad piled us into his truck with a load of corn stalks in the back - anchored securely was my cello. I have to admit I was hoping none of my friends would see me!

Fall also meant getting back into the routine of going to Grange where we got to see friends and acquaintances we hadn't seen in awhile. It was a social gathering for adults and kids. After the meeting the kids would go outside and play hide-and-seek in the area around the Nelson Grange Hall. Then there would be the refreshments. When it was time to go, we'd get our coats on and always hope we could get out the door before the adults started another conversation.

And so it went, winter, spring, summer, and fall. Some nicer than others, but no matter what, they were dealt with as they came. For me, growing up on a farm was a wonderful way of starting out life. I had the love and security of family, all the pets I wanted. Even though I had to pick stone in the spring, I wouldn't change it for anything.

Cazenovia Republican, August 12, 1875

A year or two ago some gentlemen from Morrisville, Judge Kennedy and others, built a shanty on an island in the Erieville Reservoir and name it 'Tuscarora Island'. Since that time it has been quite a place for picnics and fishing parties.

Raindrop Farm

2700 Rt 20 East, Cazenovia NY

Seasonal Produce·Plants

Custom-Built Items·Gift Baskets

Handmade Candles·Pies·Honey

Maple Syrup & Sugar·Preserves

Adirondack Furniture·Pottery

315-655-9339 or 866-655-9339

THE WELSH CHURCHES

by Jay G. Williams III

Welsh settlers may have first come to the town of Nelson as early as the 1830s. By the year 1845, there were enough Welsh in the area that they began to gather for worship in private homes. Five years later they built their first chapel. For unknown reasons, the pastor they called preached in English. This incensed some members of the congregation who did not want the word of God preached in a foreign tongue (English instead of Welsh). As a result, the congregation divided into two denominations, Congregationalists and Calvinistic Methodists (Welsh Presbyterians). The Calvinistic Methodists built a church in the latter part of 1850 where worship was held in Welsh. It was a small building called Capel Bach, or "Little Chapel". David Hughes and Edward Richards served as the church's elders. Mr. Hughes served in that capacity from 1851 until his death in 1902.

Capel Bach was dissolved as a church in 1917. However, the building was opened for various services until the death of David Hughes Jr. in 1930. The old church was converted into a private residence which stood on the Old State Road, opposite Hughes Road, until its collapse in 1992.

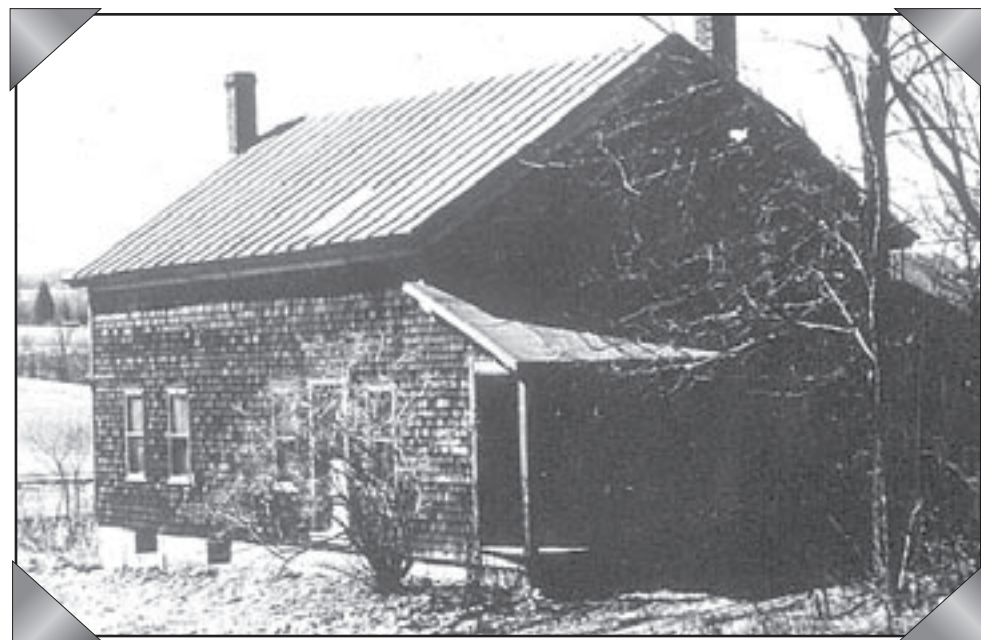
The church which is most familiar to area residents is the Welsh church located on Welsh Church Road in East Nelson.

That congregation traces its history to the Congregationalists who belonged to the Welsh church which burned in 1850. In 1853, the Congregationalists purchased an old church which had been erected by Presbyterians in 1813 and used by Baptists from 1848 until they sold the property to the Welsh.

From 1853 until the 1870s, the congregation began to grow. Rev. Griffith Jones, who was known for his skill in organizing church building projects, was called and led the campaign to erect the present building, which was completed in 1876. The new chapel was named Peniel. The old church was converted into a parish hall and was used as such until destroyed by fire in 1946.

The church remained very active into the beginning of the 20th century and drew members from a wide area. Services were held on Sunday mornings and evenings. The story is told that the church was so crowded that one Sunday, a new family came to the church. They walked down the aisles looking for a seat. No one was willing to make room for the newcomers, who, not finding any room to sit, walked out of the church and never returned. Welsh was used in worship until 1919.

After World War I, membership declined sharply so that only a small group was



Little Welsh Church, formerly Baptist Church, remodeled as a residence, and occupied by Mrs. John Roberts and her son Lloyd Roberts

attending by 1930. In that year, the first Old Home Day service was held. By the mid-1950s, the church had become a community church and no longer belonged to any denomination. Today, services are held on Sunday evenings during the summer. The summer services conclude with the Old Home Day service held the

second Sunday afternoon in September. This service features four-part Welsh hymn singing. The congregation is also blessed to have the Nelson Quartet which sometimes has as many as eight or more men in it. The large cemetery which sits by the church is maintained by a cemetery association which was formed in 1925.

FROM HORSESHOES TO CAPACITORS, MANUFACTURING IN NELSON

by Dorene Lyon Setliff

Manufacturing in the town of Nelson has progressed greatly from the making of harnesses, barrels, horse shoes and hats. Trush Park, on Route 20 East, is the best example of that. Over 40 years ago, John Trush started importing and distributing electronic components. He died in 1974 and his assistant Peter Kip along with Peter Mitchell and the Trush family (Pat Trush and sons Doug and Glen) have continued to build Trush Park into what it is today. Bill Magee has also been instrumental in the building of the Park. Over the years, several businesses have been encouraged to move to this location.

Dielectric Laboratories, founded in New Jersey in 1974, was acquired by Trush and moved to Trush Park in 1977. A manufacturer of capacitors, resonators, and other microwave and millimeter wave components, Dielectric was sold to the Dover Corporation in 1985.

Marquardt GmbH., headquartered in Germany, has factories all over the world. In 1981, it established Marquardt Switches, Inc. in Cazenovia and, needing a larger building, it moved to Trush Park in 1985. This company is a "supplier of mechanical switches and complex electronic switches, controls and systems." These switches can be found on power tools, appliances and in automobiles.

Tronser Inc. is a joint venture with the Trush family. Also based in Germany, Tronser manufactures "high precision electromechanical components for professional electronics", milled to individual specifications. Tronser designs and manufactures variable capacitors.

Pelco Component Technologies is composed of five divisions: Airotronics is a supplier of timers and controls, STK Electronics makes film capacitors, Trimax manufactures circuit protectors and Flexcon produces flexible test connectors. Peltic Timers offers time-based controls and synchronous motors.

Additionally, the firm of Stearns and Wheler is located in the Cazenovia side of Trush Park and the Community Memorial Health Center with three physicians and an Adult Day Care Center is located behind the manufacturing buildings.

We know what barrels, harnesses and horseshoes were used for, but unless you are an engineer, you may not understand how resonators, capacitors and test connectors are used. These items affect our daily lives in ways unknown to us. We do know that over 400 people are employed in the Trush Park businesses, and that's a good thing for the Town of Nelson.

Cazenovia Republican, 1918

NELSON MORE THAN DOUBLES ITS QUOTA FOR LIBERTY BONDS

A soldier home on furlough brought home the truth of war that many of us had never heard before and the need for every citizen to help by investing in Liberty Loan bonds. When a house to house canvas was completed, the sum of \$11,000 was raised to purchase the bonds, doubling the quota of \$4800.

Congratulations to the Town of Nelson From the Family of

- 1st Generation Nelson Settler - EBENEZER LYON 1764-1829**
- 2nd Generation - Merit Lyon 1804-1837**
- 3rd Generation - Merritt D. Lyon 1835-1918**
- 4th Generation - David Case Lyon 1863-1936**
- 5th Generation - Merritt D. Lyon Sr. 1889-1980**
- 6th Generation - Merritt D. Lyon Jr. 1911- , Eugene Lyon 1913-2002
Virginia Lyon Brooks 1916-2005, Roberta Lyon Moseley 1919-**
- 7th Generation - Raymond Lyon, M. Fay Lyon, Marva Lyon Kelley,
Dorene Lyon Setliff, Nancy Lyon Herzig, David Brooks,
Beverly Brooks Buck, Joan Moseley Law, Gene Moseley**
- 8th Generation - Dan Lyon, David Lyon, Tom Lyon, Andy Lyon,
Bryin Herzig, Kerry Herzig, Eric Setliff, Alissa Setliff,
Daneene Kelley Hoyt, Gary Kelley, Karen Buck Hale,
Kimberly Buck, Kelly Buck Place, Sheri Brooks Pynn,
Jason Brooks, Stephanie Davies Chapin, Wendy Davies,
Brian Moseley, Brittany Moseley, Erin Moseley, Mark Moseley**
- 9th Generation - Katelyn and Christopher Hale, Chelsea Herzig,
Brooke and Skylar Pynn, Justin and Jade Chapin, Lilly Place,
Cameron Jeans, Ava Marshall, Madison Brooks**

A NOTABLE NELSONIAN: MERRILL A. BAILEY

Nelson was the home of the watercolorist Merrill A. Bailey for many years, and the surrounding area was the subject of most of his wintery watercolors. His wife, Marie Buckingham was from Erieville. She attended Erieville Union School and, in 1927, she and four other pupils from Erieville went to Earlville for their fourth year. They traveled the 18 miles by train every day. Marie Buckingham Bailey was a musician who taught piano to many Nelson children in the '40s and '50s and who helped direct the Nelson Methodist Church Children's choir during that period. The Baileys lived in the "Old Stone School" on the Old State Road. The Erieville railroad station was added to the back of the school by Mr. Bailey.

Most Cazenovia Central School students during the 1940s-1970s remember Mr. Bailey's art classes which included drafting – a wonderful experience for those who were not too artistically inclined along with the more talented. He also drove a little school bus which many of us remember fondly.

Merrill Bailey was born in Cazenovia in 1909 and attended Pratt Institute and Syracuse University where he received his BFA. Besides teaching at Cazenovia Central School for 35 years, he also taught art at Cazenovia Junior College and Syracuse University.

Mr. Bailey had a unique method for painting local landscapes during the cold central NY winters. Since he did sketching and even painting in the back seat of his car, he had to devise not only a good surface to work on but a way to keep warm in freezing temperatures. As described by Norman Kent in the book *100 Watercolor Techniques* (Watson-Guptill, 1968), he constructed a "sheet of heavy plywood with a folding leg which supports the end not resting on the (car) seat. Measuring approximately 18" X 36", it has a hole on the top large enough to hold a 2-quart pail of water. On this surface, which is level, there is ample room for his paper, a white enamel palette, cleansing tissues and a folded Turkish towel on which he lays his brushes."

Mr. Bailey himself commented in *American Artist* (March 1956) that "this platform leaves the arms and legs free to



Merrill Bailey's invitation to old stone school centennial celebration, 1945

thrash about which definitely eliminates the strain on the disposition caused by an overturned water pail or dropped brushes, during the course of a painting." He goes on to say that "another thing which I recommend, that adds greatly to one's comfort on a very cold day, is an old fashioned soapstone - the kind that grandfather used in the bottom of the sleigh. When this is thoroughly heated and wrapped in several layers of newspaper and sat on, it will keep one's rear end comfortable for several hours!" Local residents still remember seeing Mr. Bailey parked in his car sketching and painting in the dead of winter.

Merrill Bailey's watercolors usually depict central New York barns, houses and especially winter scenes. Striking in many of his pictures are the willow trees with light colored branch tips and cold dark trunks; if one looks around Nelson in the winter, the willow trees stand out just as he depicted them. He usually framed his paintings with his own handmade frames, many made from "wormy chestnut".

His daughter, Brenda Bailey Picht, remembers how her mother promoted her father's artwork to "picture prospects", persons from out of town who were

interested in buying his paintings. These "prospects", often prominent New Yorkers, were entertained at dinner and Brenda was taught to help serve the several courses which her Mother prepared. Then she was allowed to stay up for the conversation which followed dinner – heady evenings for a young girl. Visitors always wanted tours of the "Old Stone School" which the Baileys had furnished with antiques. Brenda remembers that she never knew when her entire home would be on display; she felt she was living in a museum. Now, interested in antiques herself, she is rightfully proud of her parents and their home.

Merrill Bailey's paintings have been exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Toledo Museum of Art and in a special exhibit in New York City during World War II titled "The American Artists for Victory Exhibition". His biography is included in "Who Was Who in American Art". Marie Bailey died in 1959. Mr. Bailey's second wife was Pauline Fryer, a popular teacher in Cazenovia. Merrill Bailey died in 1981.

TWO ARTISTS

by Dorene Lyon Setliff
with Lee and Mary DuSell

Longtime Nelson resident, David Jones tells the following about the Grange Hall in Nelson. It was built in 1880 to be used by the community for plays and other entertainment as well as for town meetings. In 1914, the building was purchased from Wiley Richards by the newly formed Grange #1271 and moved several yards to its present location. The Grange disbanded in the 1980s, and since 1995 the building has been the home of "Thing of the Past", an antique shop of museum quality owned by Mary DuSell. Mary and her husband, Lee, are both artists. They met in 1950 at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan where they had painting studios across from each other. Married in 1953, the Dusells lived and worked in Utah; Aurora, Illinois and Detroit before moving to central New York in 1956. Multitalented, Mary painted and made jewelry at the beginning of her career and now makes collages of antique buttons and buckles, quilt pieces, greeting cards and other antique items.

Lee has had his own illustrious career. Preferring to call himself an artist, he is a master designer and craftsman in metal and wood. In his early career, he designed a Dining Table of wood and cast aluminum which won prizes in the 1950s; the table was beautiful and practical and was actually used by the DuSell family. In 2003, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts created an exhibit called "The Maker's Hand: American Studio Furniture 1940-1990" which included this table. In 2005, the museum bought the table to show in a future gallery of mid-century art and design.

Lee credits the Dining Table for an invitation to teach at Syracuse University where he was a member of the faculty of the School of Art for 30 years, retiring in 1992. During that time he was also kept busy with the Bimah design for an Illinois synagogue, entry doors for a building at Harvard, baptistry gates for a church in Syracuse, among many, many other projects. He was also an "Artist Consultant" working with Minuro Yamasaki, the architect of the now lost World Trade Center. His latest piece is the creation of a case for a digital keyboard, designed for Howard Auchincloss of Cazenovia. A modest and spiritual man, Lee's philosophy is reflected in his life and his work.

Mary's antique shop is a showpiece for her work and Lee's. His giant-sized wooden buttons grace the entry doors of the shop, and Mary's artistic ability is obvious in the design of the displays and the button collages on the walls. The Grange is authentically restored, many Grange artifacts are on display, and it is not at all uncommon for visitors to say, "Oh, I remember coming to the meetings" (or "dinners", "plays" or "square dances"). Or, "My grandfather was a past master of the Grange and I just saw his picture up there on the stage."

Now the truth must come out – even though the DuSell's home address is Erieville, the old farmhouse where they have made their home for the past 37 years is actually in the town of Georgetown! However, the town of Nelson is happy to share this artistic couple with its neighbors.

A NOTABLE NELSONIAN - DONALD STEARNS

Donald Stearns, a long time resident in the Town of Nelson, graduated in 1927 from Alfred University and received his Bachelor's degree in Architectural Engineering in 1931 from MIT and his Master's degree in Civil Engineering from Harvard University. He came to Syracuse University in 1945 to become Dean of Civil Engineering. He started his own engineering firm in 1950 and moved to Erieville in 1951, working with a small staff from his home on what is now Stearns Road. (The house is now owned by Raymond and Rosemary Lyon.) In 1955, A. Gordon Wheler joined Mr. Stearns in the

firm "Stearns and Wheler, Engineers and Scientists". Starting with a staff made up of the two partners, an engineer, a draftsman and a secretary, "Stearns and Wheler", located on Route 20 in Cazenovia, is now a major employer in the area. For over 50 years the firm has been involved in civil, sanitary and environmental engineering. Mr. Stearns retired in 1962 but remained active in environmental engineering by managing projects in Burma, Bangladesh, Turkey and other countries. He died in 1987.

Donald Stearns' wife, Catherine, graduated from Alfred University, University of Pennsylvania and completed doctorate de-

gree courses at Radcliff College. She taught art in many schools before moving to Nelson. She also taught art in The American Schools while abroad with her husband and was an artist in her own right.



Donald Stearns

CHURCHES IN THE TOWN



Nelson Methodist Church, Cherry Valley Turnpike 1940

ERIEVILLE CHURCHES

From James H. Smith's History of Madison County (D. Mason & Co., Syracuse, 1880), Erieville History and Pictures by Louise M. Isbell (Mid-York Press, 1971) with additional information from Sonia Hull Davies.

The early settlers brought religion with them and, early on, met for services in their homes, schools and even outdoors. The Erieville Baptists built their first church in 1811, east of the present post office. Within a year, they lost the building due to the fact that they had not obtained proper title. They then built what was known as the "Temple" about a mile north of the village. This served as both a church and school house until 1821 when they built a church near the cemetery. According to notes made in 1906 by Marion Norton Greenwood for the Madison County centennial, "the membership increased rapidly until there were over 100 members. They enjoyed a season of prosperity until about the year 1844 when the subject of slavery caused a division among its members, and quite a number left the church to form a Methodist class." According to Louise Isbell, "In 1877, they moved the building about 40 rods to enlarge the cemetery. The original cost of the church was \$2000 and when it was moved, another \$4000 was spent to modernize it by removing the old fashioned high pulpit and box pews." In 1879, the membership was only 24 and by 1912, they deeded the building to the Methodists. This church is the present day Erieville United Methodist Church. It has been renovated and redecored several times since the Methodists took it over.

The Methodists in Erieville also had a start in the early 1800s and for several years were served by circuit preachers in homes and schools. In 1850, they built a church at a cost of \$800. Sheds were later built behind the church presumably as shelter for parishioners' horses and buggies on cold

winter days. When the Methodists moved to the old Baptist Church in 1912, the Methodist building was sold and used as a town hall and the church sheds used to store road machinery (Louise Isbell). It burned in 1931. For many years the Erieville church shared a charge with Nelson. The current pastor is Rev. Nelson Stafford.

Another denomination had a short success in Erieville – the Universalists. They built a church on Erieville Road in 1842 and by 1880 it was being used as a Town Hall. It then found another purpose in the 20th century when it became the Grange Hall.

NELSON CHURCHES

Various Protestant sects came and went in the hamlet of Nelson. The first meetings in the early 1800s were held, as in Erieville, in private homes, schools and outdoors. Information about the specific denominations and their churches is scarce. For a while there was a Free Methodist Society and also a Baptist congregation which built a house of worship 3 miles east of Nelson Village. According to James H. Smith, (cited above) in 1831 the Baptists reported a membership of 104. By 1852, the number of members was 33 and their Association minutes indicate that "A season of darkness has prevailed with this church; but being favored with the preaching of the word, they are beginning to awake and feel encouraged to hope for better days." Nothing came of the high hope and the Baptist Church was taken over by the Free Methodists within a few years. There was also a Welsh Congregational Church in the town which ultimately moved to the Welsh Church site on Welsh Church Road.

Fay Lyon gives us the following account of the Nelson Methodist Episcopal Church according to the recorded minutes of the first Congregational Society of the Town of Nelson. That congregation built the building now used by the Methodist Church in Nelson on Route 20. It was built in 1826 with the money raised by subscription and the pews

sold afterwards. Any surplus money was to be used in finishing the house. The meeting house was dedicated in January 1827. After a strong beginning, the Congregational Society foundered and the church building was no longer used. By 1853, it was put up for sale and the First Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Nelson bought it for \$455. Joseph C. Smith was contracted to do the necessary repairs for \$1050. He agreed to cover up a sluice in front of the church building with hemlock planks covered with cedar timber for the entire width of the property. The basement was "fitted up" into two classrooms and a conference room. Repairs inside the church consisted of changing the pulpit from front to rear, removing the "galleries" on the two sides and rear and "fitting up" the same in front, turning the pews to face the pulpit. An altar was also built.

In 1877, the church building was again repaired and remodeled. The basement was essentially filled in and a session room was added to the rear with the second floor level designated as a "Ladies Parlor". The present stained glass windows and a new steeple were also added that year.

Work has continued up to the present time. In the 1950s, the basement was dug out again to make room for a new dining room and kitchen to replace the dining room and kitchen on the second floor level.

The Nelson United Methodist Church shares a charge with Cazenovia and the current minister is Rev. Betty Burlew.

The Methodist churches remain viable in Nelson and Erieville and the Welsh Church, now nondenominational, holds services only in the summer months.



Erieville Methodist Church, formerly the Baptist Church



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ERIEVILLE NATIVE, MAJOR IVAN ODELL, KILLED IN PLANE CRASH ON MOUNT RAINIER

Ivan Odell, an Erieville native and brother of Celia Markowski of Erieville and Vernon Odell of Georgetown, was killed in an airplane crash on Mount Rainier in Washington State on April 15, 1968. Major Odell had joined the Air Force in 1942. His brothers, Jesse and Arnold, also served in World War II. After the War, Ivan briefly returned to civilian life but was eager to return to the Air Force and ultimately made a career of it. In April, 1968, he and another pilot were flying back to their home base in Washington after an aborted training mission in California. Their flight path took them over Mount Rainier's glaciers and after losing radio contact with the air controllers in Seattle, the plane went down in bad weather. Two days later, Ivan's family, which included his wife Marjorie and three daughters, was told that the remains of both pilots had been recovered on the glacier at 10,000 feet. Funeral services were held at the air base, the mountain, and at the Odell cemetery plot. Two weeks after his death, Ivan Odell was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

THE WRECKAGE OF PLANE LOST IN 1968 FOUND ON A MOUNT RAINIER GLACIER

In October 2005, hikers on Mount Rainier discovered the wreckage of a plane and human remains on the Mount Rainier glacier at about 6,800 feet. The identification number on the wreckage matched that of Ivan Odell's plane lost in 1968. It had moved down the mountain from 10,000 feet. Apparently when the searchers in 1968 indicated that they had "recovered" the plane, they had actually only located the plane and had intentions to complete the search later. They never went back to recover the remains. The Odell family once again had to face the tragedy of the crash which had occurred 37 years ago. In 2006, Ivan Odell was finally laid to rest in Arlington Cemetery with a fourth funeral service.

Cazenovia Republican, *June 29, 1905*

Sunday broke the record for automobiles. Six went by on the turnpike.

by John Taibi

For an all too brief a period of time, the Town of Nelson was connected to its Madison County neighbors and all of NY and the US by the twin ribbons of steel of a railroad. From 1873 until 1937, the Syracuse & Chenango Valley Railroad – later the Chenango Branch of the New York Central – delivered prosperity, people, and packages to the doorstep of the township.

Although the S&CVRR officially opened for its entire length (from Syracuse to Earlville) on Feb. 12, 1873, the communities along its route had been suffering from railroad fever since the late 1850s. It was then that a corps of surveyors had descended on central NY to find a passage for an eventual railroad to be built from New York City to Oswego. As a portion of that route, they located a line between the Chenango Valley at Earlville and the City of Syracuse. This proposed routing would bring the railroad through Nelson's community of Erieville.

Although considered to be of easy grade, the line – if built – would be 44 miles in length and have to surmount a moderate change of elevation from 1,077 feet at Earlville to 1,596 feet at Erieville. From Erieville, which was the highest point on the route, the line would then descend continually until the Syracuse area – at 470 feet – was reached. At this pre-Civil War time, the surveyors and engineers already realized that should a railroad be constructed along this line there would have to be many cuts and fills as the road wound across the hills and dales. More concern was given to the thought that a tunnel would also have to be employed for the railroad to pass under Palmer Hill between Cazenovia and Oran.

Construction began on the S&CVRR on June 8, 1870. On Jan. 2, 1872, the line was in operation as far as the Temperance House, and could not proceed further until a 1608-foot tunnel was completed under Palmer Hill. While work on the tunnel was being prosecuted, construction from Cazenovia through the towns of Nelson, Georgetown, and Lebanon to Earlville was undertaken simultaneously. When the tunnel was completed during Oct. 1872, service began to Cazenovia and the entire line was thrown open for service on Feb. 12, 1873. Local citizens were now delighted to be able to travel comfortably in the railroad's cars and ship their goods to market via the railroad's services. Revenue, however, was slight for the railroad, and shortly after it was opened it fell into bankruptcy.

The S&CVRR was then reorganized as the Syracuse & Chenango Railroad (May 1873) and for four years it operated in a somewhat satisfactory manner. When the S&C fell upon hard times, the line was again reorganized as the Syracuse, Chenango & New York Railroad (April 1877), then, later, as the Syracuse, Ontario & New York Railway (Jan. 1883). This series of reorganizations was not unusual for railroads of the time.

It was not the lot of Nelson's railroad to remain independent for its entire life. It

NELSON'S RAILROAD

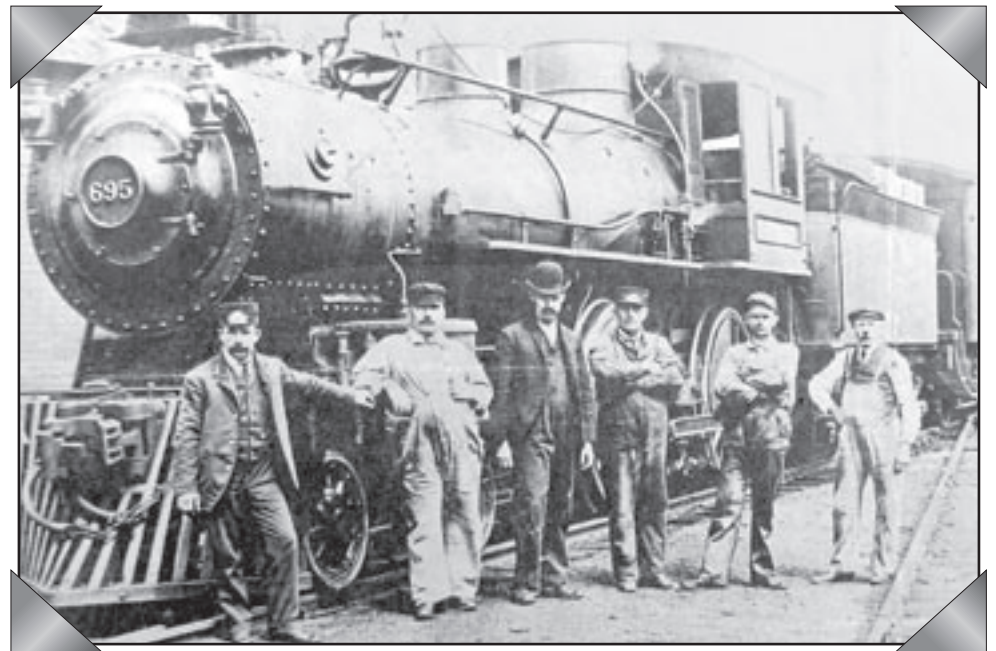
was acquired by the New York, West Shore & Buffalo Railway, a railroad that was itself acquired by the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad. On July 1, 1890, the SO&NYRR officially became the Chenango Branch of the New York Central Railroad.

As a ward of the mighty and financially successful New York Central Railroad system, it might be thought that the Chenango Branch would lead a charmed life. That was not the case. NYCRR branches had to pull their own financial weight; the only thing the Chenango pulled was lightly patronized coaches and mostly empty boxcars. To help ward off declining passenger receipts, the NYCRR replaced the manpower-rich traditional steam

echoing in the valleys, telegraph sounders clicking out dots-and-dashes, and conductors calling out "All Aboard" were now forever gone.

Erieville's railroad facilities had mirrored those of other communities on the Chenango Branch; a wooden depot – two, possibly three of them, a creamery and, just to the north of Dugway Road, a water tank could be found. It came in handy for replenishing the thirst of panting steam locomotives that had come up the grades from Earlville and Syracuse.

In the Town of Nelson, there are folks with long memories as well as deep pockets. They helped to financially aid the road's construction, delighted in seeing the railroad



Passenger train and crew, old Chenango Branch Railroad

powered passenger trains with self-propelled rail cars. These cars carried the final passengers on the Chenango Branch as this service was discontinued on June 24, 1933.

One of the primary reasons for building the Chenango Branch was to deliver a steady supply of coal to the region. Syracuse needed it most, but all the communities along the line appreciated its heating qualities as well. Quantities of lumber, limestone, and agricultural products all rode the Chenango's rails but not in the amount needed to financially sustain the line. A dairy industry, however, did develop along the Chenango, with independent milk stations and creameries put up at Lebanon, Georgetown, Erieville, Cazenovia and Oran. Aside from shipments of milk, cream, and cheeses, little other products of an industrial nature ever located along the route.

This lack of business between Earlville and Cazenovia caused the New York Central to petition for abandonment of this section of the Chenango Branch; it was allowed to do so in 1937. The rails were taken up, and all of a sudden the once important – and much needed – railroad was gone from Lebanon, Georgetown, Erieville, Ballina (Webster's Springs) and Rippleton – where a connection with the Lehigh Valley Railroad once flourished. The sounds of whistle blasts

come to fruition and, yes, were disappointed to see its passing. The Town of Nelson has now been without the Chenango Branch for longer than the railroad had been in existence. But, human nature being what it is, town residents still fondly recall their old friend and forgive its shortcomings – not to mention its untimely departure.

If the abandoned railroads could speak, the Chenango would let all of its online communities know of its infatuation with them, and would certainly be delighted to be a part of Nelson's history as well as its Bicentennial celebration.



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JOSEPH CARD, SR. 1766-1844, HIS YEARS IN NELSON

From an on-line essay by
Reginald S. Card Sr. and Leta A. Card

Joseph Card was the first of 10 children born to Elisha Card and Martha Williams Card in the village of Pownal, Bennington County, Vermont. He was born on March 7, 1766. During the time of the Revolutionary war, his father Elisha was a member of Captain Nathaniel Seeley's Company in Colonel Samuel Herrick's regiment of militia. In a file of Card family genealogy at the museum in Bennington, Vermont, Joseph recounted how, as a boy of 11, he heard the guns from the Battle of Bennington.

On July 19, 1787, when he was 21, Joseph married Hannah Briggs (nee Giles). There were three children born in Pownal to Joseph and Hannah; Lucy, Phoebe, and Syrena. In 1794, this little family, along with Joseph's parents and his seven living brothers and sisters, came to New York as part of the group of pioneers leaving Pownal to settle in what was to become the Town of Nelson. Joseph bought the western one-third of the Great Lot 73 from John Lincklaen. Today this is on Hall Road.

On this new homestead, a crude road went south from the Old State Road, and followed a creek down to where Lakeshore is today on Tuscarora Lake. On the east side, the road passed near the side of a swamp, in which Joseph made a one-acre clearing and erected a log cabin. They lived there until 1803. In this cabin three more children were born: Elias, Palmer Cady, and Joseph, Jr. More land was cleared and sowed to grain. Terms on the purchase of property at that time were \$4.00 per acre at 6% interest, with three acres cleared and sowed to grain the first year.

By 1800, the road was changed to the west side of the farm, leaving the log cabin by itself a third of a mile away, so at this time a new frame house was built on the property, post-and-beam construction with plank walls. It was one of the first frame houses built in the

Town of Nelson. This was a crude home by today's standards but luxurious compared to the little log house, especially for a growing family. Farm buildings included a chicken house, horse barn, cow barn, and a storage building. A hog pen was off the back of the horse barn. The outbuildings were attached to the woodshed at the house, European style.

Joseph stayed there until 1814, at which time he sold the farm to Zebediah Maxham, whose daughter Sally later married Joseph's son Elias. Elias' son, Orpheus, was born on the homestead and spent half of his childhood there. Orpheus was later given the farm by his grandfather Maxham, and Orpheus' youngest son, Frank Card, inherited it. Thus, the original homestead remained in the Card family from 1794 until 1938, when taxes became delinquent, and it was sold at the Madison County auction. The old frame house burned in 1928.

When Joseph sold the farm, he bought what was called the Billings Lot on the State Road in the Town of Lebanon. Today the area is on Lebanon Road at the corner of Bastain Road, where the well-known "old stone mill" remains can still be seen. At this site Joseph built two ponds and a raceway; the latter is still in evidence. He also built a wooden gristmill and a farm home and outbuildings in Lebanon. He operated the gristmill until 1825.

Joseph Card must have been an amazing man. In a period of about 20 years, he brought his family to a new county, cleared wilderness to build a log home and then a frame home and outbuildings, and built another home with outbuildings and a gristmill that included a raceway a quarter-mile long and two ponds. This was all done without backhoes, chainsaws, or bulldozers – all the hard way.

DINING OUT IN ERIEVILLE AND NELSON, JULY 1958

From the *Hi, Neighbor!* July 17, 1958



Christabell and Byron Westcott and their 1949 Hudson at the Erieville Grange Hall, formerly the Universalist Church, January 1953

Cazenovia Republican, Dec. 29, 1949, CHURCH NOTES

Erieville Methodist Church by Mrs. Edwin Tainter: A most enjoyable Christmas party was held Friday evening, December 23rd. 150 children and adults were present and a fine program by the children under the direction of Mrs. Norman Odell, Sunday School superintendent and teacher, was presented. A choir of 17 voices rendered some fine singing. Special soloist, Miss Shirley Spaulding, sang "Ave Maria." Sunday morning services were opened by a musical duet with Mrs. Richard Hughes at the organ and Mrs. Merrill Bailey at the piano. The choir under the direction of Mrs. Hughes rendered two inspiring anthems.

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THE HAMILTON FAMILY IN NELSON

by the Hamilton cousins: Fred Westfall, William Parker,
Kay Parker Rosenberg, Sue Hamilton Patten, and Ann Hamilton DuPree

Early in the 18th century the Hamilton family came to America from Scotland to settle in Blandford, Massachusetts.

David Hamilton, our great, great, great, great grandfather was born in 1742 and died March 23, 1817. In 1776, the Revolutionary War began and David became a Lieutenant – then Captain – during his service toward helping establish American independence. He was first a Minuteman in the Lexington Alarm Roll of Captain John Ferguson

Company; then Lieutenant in Captain Reuben Munn's Company; then First Lieutenant in Sam Sloper's 12th Company. According to family history, in payment for this service he was given 100 acres of land that had become "open land" as a result of a newly established boundary of land ownership for the Indians following the war. This land given to Hamilton was located in the Town of Nelson.

When he came to Madison County, he

purchased some additional land. He then returned to Blandford to marry Mary Knox, the sister of another soldier from Blandford who had acquired land just south of his in New York State. They built the first homes on the land – one of which was a log cabin on a knoll overlooking a little creek in what is now Fred Westfall's pasture. The hearth from that first cabin is the bottom landing of Westfall's outdoor steps. Some of the hand carved pieces of furniture and tools are still there.

The first frame house stood across the road from the log cabin. A sap house and an ice house have been on that location. The lumber for that frame house was sawed in a water power mill that was located right there on the creek. Some of that lumber is 30" wide and was reused to build parts of some of the homes of family members. In 1854 the big farm house that is now Fred's home was built with lumber from their own mill. Recently, a remodeled addition to this house was constructed from lumber harvested from the swamp and woodlands of the family farm.

In 1845, great, great grandfather David Hamilton – the same man who built the big house – constructed a beautiful little stone schoolhouse near Nelson. David was a stonemason and farmer, and his schoolhouse has been widely photographed and painted for its rustic early American beauty.



Hamilton Family ca. 1925, from left: Marian, Calvin William, Viola and Marcia

NELSON OPENS NEW BUILDING

Cazenovia Republican,
Jan. 1979

Carpeting, paint and some finishing touches are all that are needed to complete the new Town of Nelson office building on the Nelson-Fenner Rd. Built with an \$86,000 grant from the Economic Development Agency, the one-story building is the first permanent home for town records in Nelson. "They've been scattered all over," Gladys Richards, town clerk said. "We found some of them in the bedroom of a former clerk."

The building has some special touches including chestnut counters donated by T.E. Tainter, old ballot boxes, and some antique chairs donated by the Village of Morrisville. A wood-burning furnace is used to heat the building. The fuel is free, coming from cuttings of the highway department along the Nelson Roads. The building is on 14 acres of land donated by Robert Riedl of Cazenovia that is also the Nelson Town Park.

"We've received many donations," Mrs. Richards said. "Among them are a flag and flag pole donated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars that will be erected in the spring."

The building will be used as offices for the clerk and supervisor, town board meetings, public hearings, court sessions, voting (though a voting machine will also be kept in Erieville, a hamlet of Nelson) and community activities.

CHATting WITH LUELLE DAVIS AND PAULINE BROWN

by Sonia Sadoff Davies

There was a lot to learn about Luella and her family when we chatted early in November 2006. Luella's maiden name is Pratt. Mother and Father came to this area from Minnesota in 1924 or '25, another family which moved to Nelson from out west. There were nine children at the time of the trek to New York State, and they rode in the back of a stake-rack truck. Roy and Edna Pratt left a large extended family near the border of Minnesota and North Dakota. Huge farms in that area had originally been established by Swedish people.

When her parents had to look for a smaller farm, they found one for sale in the east; "Square Meadows" was advertised by the Hughes family. It was in the Town of Nelson bordering the Town of Eaton. Today the farm is called Coach Stop Farm on Hughes Road. The farm in Minnesota and all the cows were sold at auction before the family began their journey east.

The Pratts continued to build the family to a total of 13 children. Luella was born in 1928, after the move to Nelson. At some point during Luella's early childhood, her mother became very ill and Luella moved to Cazenovia to be raised by an older sister, Eva Walsh.

Luella Pratt and Fenton Davis met at a

school basketball game. They were married in 1945 when Luella was seventeen. The Davis farm was in the village of Nelson; Luella and Fenton lived next door to the Nelson Inn, now Nelson Farms.

Fenton and Luella farmed with his parents, Howell and Helen Davis. The cows were wintered in the barn in Nelson and then summered on Putnam Road up the hill and to the west of Nelson. The summer milking barn is no longer standing, but it was a local landmark for many years. The barn foundation, called Howell's barn, remains a reference point to the natives still living on the road.

Fenton and Luella had six children and there are 13 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren; Fenton died in 1995. When the family gathers to celebrate Christmas, Luella is the matriarch. The total number of descendants and spouses is 43.

She spoke fondly of two best friends. Both were wives of local farmers. The three women were members of the Argos Home Bureau; the group socialized during their projects of braiding rugs, making tin trays with crimped edges, constructing portable sewing cabinets and many other endeavors. Church was another means of social connection. The same three ladies,

along with many others, were active in the church, Sunday school, fund-raising roast beef suppers, and the Mr. and Mrs. Club.

Luella reflected about cutting and baling hay in a sleeveless shirt, frequently with a child in her lap. She often saw her neighbor's wife doing the same task. They would wave across the lots from the tractor seats. Both women would soak up the rays and become very dark tanned. It was like a relaxing vacation away from home and house work. The women would finish their task, go home, shower, change clothes, prepare a family meal and take off for a church meeting or Home Bureau events.

In January 2007, I had the opportunity of chatting with another longtime resident of the area. I went to Eaton to visit my friend's Mother, a former Erieville resident, Pauline Smith Brown. I listened while Pauline, her sister Darlene and Jan reminisced about the past.

Pauline was born in 1919 on the homestead. The house was one of the first plank homes in the Town of Nelson on what is now Brown Road. She is one of six children: three girls – Christine, Pauline and Darlene, and three boys – Donald, Alfred and Clifford. The siblings walked to school, a one room building on Jack Ass Hill that

housed one teacher and pupils from grades one through eight.

There was no running water in the home. The supply for the family came from a spring in the milk house. It was carried to the house in pails; laundry was done by hand on a scrub board. Pauline was 12 when a gasoline motor was purchased for their first washing machine.

Pauline remembers staying at the Erieville Hotel as a 5 year old during the mid 1920s. At that time, the hotel was owned by her grandparents, Frank and Cora Blair. The rooms were lavishly furnished with antique bedroom suites including pieces with marble tops. As a young lady, Pauline was a waitress at Slabsides in Erieville.

The New Woodstock parsonage was the site of her marriage to Merle Brown in 1937. The couple had five children: Wayne, Don, Janice, my friend Jeralyn, and Judy. A farm on Jack Ass Hill was their home from 1946-1960.

Pauline Smith Brown is great grandmother to 22 children. She harbors an abundance of knowledge and stories to share about our neighbors and community.

A family member says that she makes the best baked beans in the county!

THE COMMUNITY TEAMS UP FOR THE NATION'S 1976 BICENTENNIAL

by Denise Earl and Shirley Miller.

It started with a group called "The Cornell Club". Bev Marris had received a letter from the Bicentennial Committee of Cazenovia asking whether anyone would do something to celebrate the Bicentennial birthday. Bev called Shirley Miller, and after an hour on the telephone, the two women decided to do something within their own town. "Ideas grew and grew," says Shirley, "it was getting bigger than we could handle. The ideas seemed overwhelming and we almost quit. It was going to cost money, and we didn't have a cent - how did we plan to get some? It takes a lot of work and people to help. How many people were going to help us? Boy, just two women and not a cent!"

We had a few ideas and we talked to many people. We went to every club to tell them of our idea. We invited them to take part in the events at the ball field, something to do with our theme, "Good Old Days". We asked them to be part of a parade. We started meeting every month and invited the public to come and take part. That didn't work too well at first.

We wanted to have an auction to raise money. Bill Magee donated the auction house and his services. Netty Williams, Shirley Hill (now Miller), Sherry Nourse, Bev Card and Bev Marris called everyone in the town for donations. The auction netted almost \$600.

The Bicentennial Committee of Nelson was formed. Reg Card, Bev Marris, Roxanna Markowski, Shirley Hill, Sherry Nourse, Bill and Jeanette Magee and Gene and Henrietta Ungleich were members. Other members of the community joined later. We decided to have a commemorative plate made. We ordered 30 dozen Bicentennial plates the first time. They went so fast that we were all sold out in two or three weeks. Eventually we sold about 60 dozen plates.

With this burst of enthusiasm, the Bicentennial Belles and Brothers got going. This got people interested and involved and we had a ball! So many people have said that

they had so much fun parading and seeing people. The Brothers grew beards and were called "brothers of the brush". Their attire was red suspenders, buttons and hats. When meeting a Belle, he had to tip his hat to her. There were three or four other rules. If you didn't mind the rules, you were fined 10 cents and taken to Kangaroo Court on the day of the celebration.

The Belles' outfit was a long dress with a bonnet, buttons and garter. They also had rules. When a Brother tipped his hat to a Belle, she had to curtsy. It got to be that you took time to say "Hello" and smile at your neighbors, and this was a good feeling.

The Brothers and Belles attended many local parades in the year leading up to the big 4th of July celebration in Erieville. Sometimes they were the largest group in an area parade. The Brothers built a jail for Kangaroo Court. It went to parades. Reg got a small team of oxen started (later these pulled a float in the July parade.) About 300 people took part in the Belles and Brothers chapter.

Bev Marris started a newspaper. That went very well. There were three issues. The first one sold out at 10 cents a copy. Many charges for things or "fines" were 10 cents, which was a small reminder of their Good Old Days theme. Alberta Markowski gathered a list of military veterans, and two wooden signs were built by John Badertscher in their honor, one in Erieville and one in Nelson.

The big day arrived. Floats were put together by different organizations. Fire trucks and old cars and kids on decorated bicycles participated. The Grand Marshalls were M.D. Lyon Sr. and Mildred Wallace in a horse and buggy. The assembled crowd proceeded to the Erieville ball field where tents were set up. Food and drinks, which included a large pot of soup simmered over an open fire, sold out. One large tent was for mothers, grandmothers and daughters. Prizes were given for such things as the largest family group. A couple of women made beribboned keepsakes to

be used as prizes. There was a wool spinning demonstration. The men had the jail and did the judging. There was log rolling, greased pole climbing and a greased piglet. Baseball and games for kids went on all day.

From humble beginnings, to the grand birthday celebration, it seems that Shirley said it best, "We had a ball!"



1976 Bicentennial Parade in Erieville, "Mr. and Mrs. Club" float

FONDLY REMEMBERED, AN ERIEVILLE CHILDHOOD

by Abbie Bobette Redmond with Denise Earl

My parents, Otwell and Lucile Bobbette, and my Aunt and Uncle, "Bub" and Helen Barber owned Slabsides in the 1950s, as best I can remember. I was nine or ten years old when we moved out.

I remember it as being a busy place -- bar, restaurant, dancehall, Sportsmens Club, clambakes, Christmas parties, reunions, swimming and fishing.

I remember an older gentleman we called "ole Bill". He was always there sweeping and cleaning up the barroom. I would get in his way while riding my tricycle through the barroom and into the dancehall and down the many corridors upstairs and down. I recall trying to get to the barroom floor before he swept to pick up the stray coins that were misses into a trough-like tray above the bar.

I attended the CCS-Erieville school. It was a four room schoolhouse (now an apartment building). Mrs. Spaulding, Mrs. Jillson and Mrs. Pynn were my K through 5th grade teachers. Classrooms were doubled up with two grades. The gym/stage was in the 5th and 6th grade classroom on the second floor. We brown-bagged it, but milk and soup were brought in from the Cazenovia lunchroom.

THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

by David Penoyer

There is a painting done in 1850 that shows thirteen people and a dog surrounding a balding man in shirt sleeves listening intently as two men address him. The scene may have been the man's home or perhaps his shop but the scene reflects the title of the painting, "Justices' Court in the Backwoods". This court would today be the equivalent of the Nelson Justice Court. Nelson has had many Justices of this type of court, long called Justices of the Peace. Pioneer Ebenezer Lyon was the equivalent of a County Court Judge, and some of the others who have ascended the local bench, to name merely a few, include Lucius Knox, Thomas Medbury, Theodore Jones, Wellington "Wiley" Richards, J. Lyndon Jones, Everette "Cap" Richards, Theodore E. Tainter, Jr., Edward Westfall and Karin Marris.

Records of earliest legal transactions in Nelson note a hearing in the Sickie and Sheaf Drovers Inn over a contract dispute. This would be heard today in a Justice Court as well as a myriad of matters stemming from alleged violations of the Penal Law, the Vehicle and Traffic Law, the Environmental Conservation Law, Tax Law, Civil Practice Laws and Rules, Summary Eviction Proceedings, and Small Claims hearings for money damages only up to an amount of \$3,000. As in most towns, Nelson has two Justices, and it is not unusual in the local court to decide matters that bring in \$6,000 to \$10,000 each month or up to about a maximum of \$100,000. This money is forwarded by the Judges to the Chief Fiscal Officer of the Town, the Supervisor. The original amounts are split among the State, the County, and the Town depending upon the nature of the matters disposed of.

On busy summer days, I was taken to a wonderful farm family on Sanderson Road, the Spauldings. Being an only child, I loved the big family atmosphere. There was always a large meal at lunchtime, horses and a pond. The older sisters were my babysitters and the youngest, Candy, my playmate.

When wintertime rolled around, my parents needed a rest and would escape on an annual trek to Florida for a few weeks R & R. My second family would take me in. The Shaffer family, Ed and Betty, are gone now, but I remain close friends with their daughters to this day.

My mind is a little foggy about details and dates, but overall I remember my Erieville childhood fondly. It was a safe time in a safe place with nice people and leaders, Brownies, Girl Scouts, the Methodist Church Sunday School. On Halloween we could run door to door without a worry -- no razor blade checks back then.

My parents, now resting in the Erieville Cemetery, built their home nearby where my husband and I summer and my son and family now live.

Up until 1980, Justices also were members of the Town Board. This obvious conflict created by members of one branch sitting with another branch of government was dispensed with and Justices no longer sit on the Board. An early Justice, J. Lyndon Jones, served with distinction for 30 years in Nelson and was so well regarded that, when Judge Jones was not well, the Board convened at this home. As well regarded as a Judge might be today, such a situation as meeting at his or her home is not possible because of the sunshine or open meeting laws. Every effort must be made to insure that every accused person has the right to a fair and impartial hearing, free from coercion or intimidation that might pertain if the hearing were to take place where the public does not have unfettered access. The Judges themselves must always strive to maintain impartiality and worthiness. Town Justices today serve four-year terms and must complete required training for a minimum of twelve class hours each year. Judges do not have to be lawyers, although many are.

Unfortunately, not all judges have lived up to this high calling and not all court rooms are comfortable. Before the construction of the present Town Building, the Nelson Justices held court in the highway garage along Dugway Road. Counsel might then find him or herself conferring with their client while sitting in a snow plow truck, their eyes shielded by the blade as they spoke.

Nelson Justices today carry out calm decision-making for all sections of the town. There are no times when justice is rendered in a dark space as in that 1850 painting.

MEMORIES OF NELSON

by Carol Owens Marsh

When I was asked to write about my childhood memories of living in Nelson, NY, I was eager to because I had a wonderful time growing up there. My roots in Nelson go deep. Being Welsh, my great grandparents (the Richard J. Owens) and seven of their eight children, my grandparents (the Robert B. Owens), my parents (Clinton and Amelia Owens), and my sister are all buried in the Welsh cemetery. We often attended services in the summer

at the Welsh Church where some songs were still sung in Welsh. A favorite thing to do was to attend the strawberry festival when berries were at the best and were served on shortcake or ice cream.

For many years we went to the Nelson Methodist Church. I taught Sunday School as a teenager and other times I had my mother or Katie Boxell, or Fay Davies as a teacher. Marie Bailey directed the junior choir and Charlotte Badertscher accompanied it. Bible School was a summer feature and we often had picnics at Bingley Park or just on the back lawn at church. Christmas Eve was especially wonderful with a big tree and the gift of an orange, which I didn't much care for, and a box of hard candies which I thought was the ultimate. As teenagers, we girls used to waitress at church suppers and that was "big time stuff". I was married there and Mrs. Savilla Case Walters played the organ for the occasion.

The 4-H was so important in my life. We had co-ed monthly meetings at different people's houses and they were fun. I have surely used the cooking instruction daily and have sewn for family members for years.

Neighbors meant so much more back then, especially for the success of farmers on small farms. We had the Stearns, Cards, Bettingers, Badertschers, Hudsons and Westfalls. When you went trick or treating at Halloween, you went right inside the houses where you were invited to sit down and have a glass of

cider and a donut, not just candy at the door. My father made maple syrup with Fred Westfall. He and John Badertscher owned some grain and corn harvesting equipment together. Crews of ten or more men went from farm to farm with the threshing machines and silo filling equipment. That was a busy time for the farmer and there was even more pressure on his wife. My Mother had to feed ten hungry men a good, hot meal when they quit work for the noon hour.

Life on the farm was very seasonal. Spring meant planting, summer meant haying. When chores were done for the day, there was picnicking and swimming in Erieville Reservoir. It was oh, so cold by then! Fall brought the beautiful leaves and harvest time,

and of course, the beginning of school. But winter! Winter meant snow and more snow. It was so beautiful! We skated and skied, tobogganed and sledged. The roads were often closed and we rejoiced every time school was closed. Once our bus had to stop at Histed's store in Nelson and my father came and got us with horses and sleigh. During one storm, farmers dumped milk in the syrup evaporator vat on our porch as Eugene Lyon, the milkman, couldn't get through.

We built a snow fort on the steps of our front porch that year. And then, it was spring and maple syrup season again.

My happy childhood was largely due to great parents who imparted so many lessons to us by example. We were poor, but so was everyone else. We never talked about it, but thrift was the order of the day. We had the ball of string made from smaller strings tied together. A hand-me-down was worn, shared, and eventually became a rag made into a rug or mop. Small pieces of soap were collected in a wire mesh and put in the washtub on washday. This frugality paid off; all five children went to college.

Our life involved hard work and schedules. We could never be away at supertime, because of milking the cows. Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter celebrations were all held at noon. My Mother also had a rhythm to her week; she washed (with a wringer washer) on Monday, ironed on Tuesday, baked on Wednesday, cleaned on Thursday, shopped on Friday and baked for Sunday on Saturday.

Most importantly, my parents taught us about God, took us to church, read the Bible and prayed with us. They wanted to be sure that each one of us knew Jesus Christ as our Savior. Thank you, Dad and Mom.

I had a busy, happy life with my family on a 75 acre farm. There was no television. We rarely saw a movie, went to a restaurant or even went shopping in Syracuse more than twice a year. What we did have was security, love and fun.

Editor's note: Carol's Mother, Amelia Sandberg Owens moved east from Minnesota as a child of nine in 1914. The Sandberg family decided to move to central New York where farms could be bought for less money as did many other Erieville Nelson families. Six members of the Sandberg family boarded the train from Minnesota to Chicago and then the New York Central and finally the branch train which took them to "Eritown". There they learned that the hamlet was actually called "Erieville". (From "Moving East in 1914" by Amelia Owens, issue #3 of the *Erieville Nelson Patriot*, 1976.)

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THE SICKLE AND SHEAF DROVERS' TAVERN

by George W. Walter, the *Post Standard*, June 1948 with additional information from Anne Kelley, *Morrisville Leader*, summer 1939 or 1940



Nelson Post Office and Bryan James' Store, 1940s

In the center of Nelson stands a two story building, memento of the days of the drovers' taverns. In the early 1800s, taverns and inns were situated every few miles along the Great Western Turnpike (Cherry Valley Turnpike) offering food, drink and shelter. These were stopping places for stage coaches, wagons loaded with goods being moved across the state and drovers with their flocks of sheep and cattle. Near the building was a big-two storied barn and a large corral. Here, cattle, horses, sheep and swine (and possibly even turkeys) were kept while the drovers slept in the tavern. In those early days, this stopping-off place was called "The Sickle and Sheaf Drovers' Tavern". There were many owners before John James bought it from Myron Hutchinson in 1874. Mr. James turned it into a factory for manufacturing creamery supplies and tin ware. It later became a post office and feed store. When John James died in 1896, the building went to his son William and in 1934, it was inherited by his son Bryan.

The tavern itself had a dining room on one side and a bar room on the other. On the

second floor, a ball room extended the full length of the building where local fiddlers furnished music for the popular dances and reels of those times. The ball room was also used by a secret fraternal order, the Rachebit Lodge for meetings.

Mr. Walter writes: "Around 1807, the first lawsuit in Nelson was contested over the digging of a well on the tavern property. A contractor had agreed to dig the well 10 feet deep, but when he had gone down nine feet, water appeared and he halted operations. When the contractor came around for his pay, it was refused on the grounds that the well was not the depth contracted for. In the lawsuit that followed, the judge finally decreed that the contractor should be paid exactly nine tenths of the original sum. The supply of cool water occupies a conspicuous place near the front of the tavern."

This building, on the corner of Nelson Road and Route 20, has been an antique store and apartment building for many years. The barn, well, and corral are long gone.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE TOWN OF NELSON

From the HAMILTONS on Judd Road

- 1742 – 1817 David Hamilton and Mary Knox 1752 – 1828
 1777 – 1858 David Hamilton Jr. and Molly Knox 1782 -1860
 1814 – 1884 David A. Hamilton and Lucy Chaphe 1820 – 1895
 1841 – 1902 Irving Hamilton and Emma Everts 1845 – 1920
 1867 – 1947 William L. Hamilton and
 Viola Matilda Sternberg 1876 – 1942
 1900 – 1986 Calvin David Hamilton
 1908 – Marcia Hamilton Parker
 1908 – 2007 Marian Hamilton Westfall and
 Frederick Westfall 1909 – 1991
 1944 - Frederick W. Westfall

NATURE AND CULTURE AT NELSON SWAMP

by Greg Owens

Nelson Swamp is a 1,600-acre northern white cedar swamp within the townships of Cazenovia, Fenner and Nelson. It surrounds the Chittenango Creek which cuts a meandering channel through wet meadows and thick stands of pine, cedar and fir. The swamp is rich in biodiversity and has long been the haunt of botanists, birders and others naturalists searching its tangled woods for unusual plant and animal species. For generations the swamp has also been a source of forest products where selective logging and other historic land uses have contributed to the diverse ecological conditions that exist today.

Wetlands are extremely important ecosystems. They provide habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species, maintain water quality by filtering sediment and prevent flooding by absorbing and slowly releasing storm water. Nelson Swamp is a

particular type of wetland known as a northern white cedar swamp where cedar grows in pure stands but more often as a component of a mixed forest. Many of these mixed forests exhibit the late stages of ecological succession where ancient groves of pine tower above lush stands of cinnamon fern and decaying logs are carpeted with lichens, sphagnum moss and wood sorrel. Within one such stand grows an eastern white pine estimated to be 450 years old. Records indicate that it is the oldest living white pine and perhaps the oldest tree in central New York.

The most recent survey of Nelson Swamp catalogued 400 vascular plants including the endangered striped coralroot and the threatened spreading globeflower. Striped coralroot, showy lady slipper and small purple fringed orchid are just three of the many species of orchid that occur in the swamp. The area also supports a diverse population of wildlife.

Breeding birds such as the scarlet tanager, Henslow's sparrow and Northern harrier find ample food and cover in the swamp's varied habitats. Hunters pursue healthy populations of white tail deer and upland game birds and anglers take brown trout and other fish from a network of tributary streams. One local beekeeper reports black bears feasting on his hives while other neighbors spot beavers prowling the shallow banks of Chittenango Creek.

Historically, Nelson Swamp played an important role in the development of the local agricultural economy. Many farmers owned swamp parcels known as "post lots" that provided a ready supply of timber and other forest products. The rot resistant wood of white cedar was used for split rail fencing and poles to support hop vines. White pine was cut and milled for building materials and balsam fir was harvested for Christmas trees. Baskets

were woven from thin strips of black ash, and American elm was used for manufacturing a variety of farm implements. Current research at Nelson Swamp is investigating the role of selective logging as a tool for sustaining populations of threatened plants. Preliminary findings suggest that tree cutting and increased levels of sunlight support the growth and reproduction of spreading globeflower.

Some residents might recall that Nelson Swamp also has an industrial history. The West Shore Railroad passed through the swamp connecting Syracuse with Earlville, and many communities along its route financed construction to move local products to metropolitan markets. The railroad operated between 1872 and 1937 and, at its peak, 125 train cars of Cazenovia Lake ice and 31 train cars of local sand and gravel were shipped each day. Beginning in 1908, the Ballina Sand and Stone Company and later the Rock Cut Stone Company, both of Syracuse, operated a gravel mine and processing plant along Chittenango Creek. Gravel was loaded onto West Shore train cars and shipped throughout the region for use in road construction. Today the abandoned rail bed is a segment of the Madison County Link Trail which connects the Erie Canal towpath in Canastota with the Finger Lakes Trail in Chenango County.

In 1987, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) initiated the Nelson Swamp Unique Area project. The purpose of the project was to ensure perpetual protection of the areas unique natural resources including forests of exceptional character and a number of threatened and endangered species. With the assistance of a local citizen's advisory committee, DEC prepared a stewardship management plan to sustain the areas unique ecological conditions while at the same time provide opportunities for compatible public use. State acquisition of swamp parcels from willing sellers was, and continues to be, the focus of efforts to protect Nelson Swamp. Today, approximately 965 acres of the 1,600-acre swamp is in public ownership.

From its moss drenched forests of ancient trees and old pastures thick with shrubs to railcars and an odd assortment of industrial earthworks, Nelson Swamp represents many layers of time shaped by both the cycles of nature and the impress of culture.

ERIEVILLE AND EATONBROOK RESERVOIRS – NELSON'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM

The Town of Nelson is fortunate to have two man-made bodies of water whose shorelines are now very desirable locations for summer and year-round homes – Erieville Reservoir, also known as Tuscarora Lake, and Eatonbrook Reservoir.

As Owen Evans wrote in an article titled "History of Erieville Reservoir" which appeared in the *Cazenovia Republican*, Jan. 1950:

"After the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, some very dry seasons followed which lowered the water level to such an extent that at many points the canal boats rested on the mud bottom and canal traffic was not able to move, so the State started to build reservoirs where water could be stored and used when needed.

The State acquired the land for the reservoir in 1848 and the work was completed in 1857. Histories do not agree on the cost, but Hammond's history gives it as \$10,884.73. (Editor's note – According to James H. Smith's *History of Madison County* published in 1880, the Reservoir was constructed at a cost of \$36,837.) It covers an area of 340 acres and is 1,504 feet above sea level, which makes it one of the highest in the State. It is clearly indicated by the huge stumps still in a wonderful state of preservation after being submerged for nearly 100 years, that most of the area covered by the reservoir was a forest of giant trees." The mean depth of Erieville Reservoir is about 17 feet with the maximum depth being 43 feet.

Mr. Evan's map of the reservoir shows that the Hardscrabble Road to Eaton went right through the center of a narrow part of the reservoir. In his article he mentions that "the outlet consists of two 24-inch tubes and the volume of water released is controlled by two 22-inch valves. The expert iron work and masonry at the outlet is indeed a tribute

to the craftsmen of a century ago." However, Jennifer Meicht, spokesperson for the New York State Thruway Authority, which now has the responsibility of all New York State Canals, informs us that the masonry work of the outlet channel was repaired and new valves were installed in the early 1950s. The spillway, originally timber, was replaced at that time also.

Eaton Brook Reservoir is at an elevation of 1435 feet and covers around 254 acres. Its maximum depth is 45 feet. It was built in 1835 as a feeder for the Chenango Canal which extended from Binghamton to Utica. The cost was \$28,059 (from Jennifer Meicht). This Canal connected the Susquehanna River to the Erie Canal and cut shipping time from Binghamton to Albany from 9 days to 4 days. It caused a business boom in the Chenango Valley. However, the Chenango Valley Railroad, built after the Civil War made the Canal obsolete.

The Erie Canal, 363 miles long with 83 locks was opened on 1823. Besides cutting the costs of transporting freight, the Canal played a vital role in transporting settlers westward. In 1918, the Erie Canal and other New York State Canals became known as the New York State Barge Canal. Some sections of the old Erie Canal were abandoned and Oneida Lake and several rivers became part of the canal system. It wasn't long however, before traffic declined dramatically on the canals due to the expansion of the highway system, railroads and the St. Lawrence Seaway. The Barge Canal is no longer known by that name (since 1992) and once again the four remaining canals in New York State are known by their original names: Erie, Oswego, Cayuga-Seneca and Champlain. These canals have been preserved for historical and recreational purposes. Nelson's reservoirs continue to provide water to the Erie Canal.



Beebe's Island, Erieville Reservoir

Meade Floors

Since 1936

- Carpet • Vinyl
- Ceramic Tile

Ron Meade
George Meade

3273 Tuscarora Road
Erieville, NY 13061
315-662-3225

WILLIAM RICHARDS – NOTABLE ENTREPRENEUR

by Fay Lyon

William Richards and his family emigrated from Wales in 1840 and settled near Oriskany, Oneida County. In 1853, they moved to Hughes Road in East Nelson. On that property they built a small cheese house where the family probably learned the cheese making process.

As the family grew, William eventually bought what is now the Sevier farm and later the Adolph Lyga place. As his business ventures expanded, he acquired up to 1400 acres of land and had ownership in at least seven cheese factories in Nelson and Fenner.

William and his wife Margaret had nine children, who were named, for the most part, after famous people. Their eldest son, Nelson, was named after Lord Nelson, England's naval hero. The next son, Wellington, was named after the Duke of Wellington. Their third son, Edwin, was probably named after his paternal grandfather, Edward Richards. Newton, the fourth boy born, was named after Sir Isaac Newton, the English scientist. The fifth son, Milton, was named after John Milton, writer of *Paradise Lost*. Washington Lincoln was number six to come into the family and was named after our most famous presidents. Margaret Elizabeth was their only daughter and was named after her mother. Everett B., their eighth child, died at age nine, and the last was John who was named after his Uncle, John Richards.

Mr. Richards was an enterprising man and engaged in several different pursuits. Not

only was the cheese making business high on his lists of business ventures, he would have husking bees in the fall when women of the community would get together and husk corn for a percentage of the crop. Before Christmas they would get together again and feather hens and turkeys. The dressed fowl were packed in barrels and shipped to NY City. During the summer months, when the horses would be busy doing farm work, he would cover the Town of Nelson on foot, buying butter and other products from farmers. He was a merchant and would buy most anything except hops. He did that once, lost his investment, and never ventured into that enterprise again.

Before the railroad passed through Nelson and Cazenovia, the nearest railroad station was in Canastota. All the farm products were drawn there, and it was said that the oldest son Newton at the age of 11, and Wellington, aged nine, would start at 2 AM on a cold winter morning to take a load of products to Canastota to meet the early morning train.

Each fall, sometime in September, when the ministers of the Welsh circuit came to hold the Gymanfa at the Congregational Church, Mr. Richards would send two teams hitched to lumber wagons fitted with three spring seats each, to Canastota to pick up as many as 15 ministers.

At a later time in life, he bought the general store in Nelson and got Wellington (Wiley) to go into business with him. He died in 1894 at the age of 74.

MR. HOLDRIDGE REMEMBERS THE NELSON FLATS DEBATING SOCIETY

In a letter to the *Cazenovia Republican*, published on July 23, 1908, D.D. Holdridge, then living in South Dakota extols the "virtues of those sessions" where he and other young men would debate the issues of the day and of the future and which took place in Nelson in the mid 1850s. "Agriculture was the first topic that was debated, but noting that most of the young men were not inclined to that avocation, a committee was formed to set up a debating society to establish a constitution for probably the first and last debating society ever formed in Nelson Flats... They established the criteria and the topics, which were rather onerous to the extent of discussing all the great national, social and scientific issues of the time.

"After a few practice sessions were held, the members of the society were ready to

go public. The first debate was held July 8, 1854 After that debate all subsequent sessions were held in the Methodist Church, which generally were packed with expectant crowds.

"The last debate was held by the club on the 22nd day of June 1855. They had been held on a weekly basis. It was then proposed to discuss the following question, 'Resolved that there is sufficient reason to believe in the future state of punishment.' Now, by this time all the great issues had been debated and decided on. Nothing had been too deep or intricate to tackle, but they staggered on that question, so much so that they disbanded right then and there. So, after putting Webster and Hayes, and Lincoln and Douglas to shame, the existence of the Nelson Flats Debating Society came to an abrupt end."

Special Tributes

*In Recognition of and Gratitude to
Elizabeth Slocum Mansfield
Originally from Erieville*

A living tribute to her character and teaching

In Memory of David P. Currey III

*In Loving Memory of My Husband,
Norman Odell
From Helen Odell*

*In Memory of Our Grandmother
Margaret Davis Brooks 1890-1967
Born and Died in the Town of Nelson
From her Grandchildren*

*In Memory of Merritt and Viola Lyon,
R. Eugene Lyon and Virginia Lyon Brooks
From Roberta Lyon Moseley*

*With Thanks to Henrietta Ungleich
From all the 4-H Girls whom she
Taught to cook and sew.*

*In Memory of Mr. and Mrs. George
Moseley and Frederick Moseley
From Roberta Moseley, Joan Law
And Gene Moseley*

*In Memory of Henry E. Mason
Talking, Sharing, Caring
A loving husband, father and grandfather,
Always a friend and good neighbor to all,
A dedicated Conservation Club member and
leader was he.
Devoted to his country, he served in the
WW II military,
Proud are his friends and family.
In our hearts, fond memories of Henry
will always be.
Love to Henry from his family.*

*In Loving Memory of our Mom
Marguerite McCarthy, 1931-1992*

*In Memory of Florence Phillips
In Celebration of Her Life
Our Mom, our Grandma, and our Nana,
So living, so caring, so thoughtful,
Always giving from your heart.
You offered us your quiet wisdom and knowledge,
Shared stories and memories of times in the past,
Comforted us with smiles, hugs, and
unconditional
love from the kindness of your heart,
Taught us to appreciate life and celebrate
each day.
You will always be the inspiration of our lives.
Our memories of you will live forever in our
hearts.
All our love, Your Family*

*In Memory of Wendell Phillips
Loving, Caring, Hardworking
A devoted husband, Dad, Grandpa and friend
to all was he.
He worked with dedication at the
Nelson Creamery.
In our hearts, a very special memory he will
always be.
Love to Wendell from his family.*

*In Memory of Dean L. Coe
Smiling, Hugging, Caring
A husband, Dad, Grandpa and friend to all,
helping whoever would call,
a kind-hearted man was he.
Farming the hills in Nelson and flying
the skies above.
He was known as the "Flying Farmer"
and enjoyed being a race car driver.
In our hearts, he will be forever.
Love to Dean from his family.*

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In Cazenovia and Hamilton*

THE SNOWSTORM OF 1902

From a letter written to the *Cazenovia Republican* by Malcolm Card (date unknown but many years ago). Submitted by his daughter, Leta Card.

“Dear Editor:

“In your issue of February 20th, you carried a very fine comment on the severity of the present winter and of some rugged ones of yesteryears.

“I would like to call your attention to one that took place in 1902. I do not recall exactly but think it was late in February, might have been early in March. Will Stapleton was section boss at Erieville on the Chenango branch of the West Shore Railroad.

“The storm struck with such fury that the Chenango branch superintendent, I believe his name was Mr. Dale, at Syracuse canceled the passenger and freight runs and ordered out a snowplow with 2 engines, one coach and a caboose. This outfit became stuck in the cut close to the John Burton place on the Hardscrabble Road and Stapleton hurriedly gathered a group of workers to free the plow. My recollection is that there was about 12 of us and included were Rob Odell, Will Stapleton, Floyd White, Bert and Pearl Briggs, Al Smith, young Pony Moore, Anson Nourse, and myself. We walked down the track from Erieville and got the plow free about 11:00 am. Then they

pulled up to the water plug at Erieville and filled the water tank. The Erieville merchants furnished us coffee and doughnuts and we started for Earlville. The plow only got as far as Duffy’s Cut and stalled again, and we got to Earlville sometime that night, took on more water and coaled the tender and started back to Syracuse. It took the entire day to go back to Cazenovia, again getting coffee and doughnuts and sandwiches at Erieville and ditto at Cazenovia at night. Shortly after going through the tunnel toward Manlius there was a long deep cut filled level full and in that raging blizzard we spent the night trying to free the plow while 2 men were busy shoveling snow into the tender tank for water for the locomotive. The crew stayed with that plow for 3 days and nights with practically no sleep or rest, getting coffee and sandwiches wherever we could. On one trip north from Earlville, we made a turn around at Cazenovia and went back to Earlville. Young Pony Moore was caught by a turntable sweep and so badly hurt that he was taken to the Stanton House (now the Victory Store Building) and was there about a week or 10 days before he could be taken to the hospital at Syracuse.

“I believe that storm would compare very favorably with any of those mentioned in your issue of February 10th.

M.E. Card”

Cazenovia Republican, July 10, 1919

A big celebration was held at Nelson on the fourth. A 10 o’clock parade was followed by a baseball game where Nelson beat Cazenovia, followed by a chicken pie dinner at the church for 50 cents each. Then at 1 o’clock, Marshal Stone again paraded everyone back to the ball field where there was a short address given. Races were then held including sack, three-legged, best girls, 100-yard dash, wheel barrow, fat man’s and other assorted races. There was a pie eating contest, a tug of war and a ladies hitching and unhitching contest. There were awards for best paraders and best decorated car. After those festivities another ball game was held with New Woodstock beating Nelson. After adjournment for supper, the crowd gathered at the Grange Hall to witness the play, “Down In Maine” by the Oran Dramatic Club. The hall was not large enough for all, so another performance will be on the 18th of July. After the play, Heffernan’s Band played for a dance until early in the morning.

TUSCARORA LAKE ASSOCIATION

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CONGRATULATIONS ON 200 YEARS!

HOPS IN CENTRAL NEW YORK



Last Hop Barn in Nelson on Hughes Road

by E. Setliff

Without the essential ingredient of hops, “beer” is a different drink. This reflects the old German standard of purity law of 1516 which stated that beer contained four ingredients viz., barley, water, yeast, and hops. The hop plant’s cone-like fruit was added to the brewing process to create a little bitterness and favor. Also, because of hops’ mild antibacterial properties, the storage time of the drink was substantially increased before it turned bad. Although hops grew wild in North America, the early Dutch settlers in New York largely imported hops from their mother country. As settlement and the growing of barley and other grain became established, local breweries naturally developed, and the demand for hops increased dramatically along with the population. NY State became the leading grower of hops during the 19th century. The presence of a few old, dilapidated hop barns or kilns that lie scattered across the landscape bears silent witness to these golden years between 1830 and 1909. Unfortunately, the forces of Nature in the form of disease together with prohibition changed the farmers’ landscape as well as the thickness of his wallet.

In 1909, hop powdery mildew disease began to destroy the crops, and although the fungal pathogen could be controlled with an application of sulfur, this was very expensive. Later, the appearance of yet another fungal disease called downy mildew made the situation even worse. Then, as a final nail in the hop growing coffin, the temperance movements brought about the ratification of the 18th constitutional amendment in 1919. This amendment prohibited the making, transportation and selling of alcohol. The U.S. brewing industry ceased as did hop growing. The importation of bootleg whiskey from Canada and Nassau, the illicit production of

whitelightnin’ in the South and homebrewing, soon became growth industries. Prohibition was repealed in 1933 as a failed ideal, but hop growing never returned to NY. The northwestern states, without the powdery mildew disease, were able to grow hops at a lower cost. However, in 1996 the mildew was found in Washington State and has rapidly spread throughout the northwestern states.

The presence of hop vines growing up 12 – 25 foot poles on many of the farms in this area must have been an impressive sight. To see some examples of living hops, a summer time trip to Cooperstown’s Farmers Museum is highly recommended. Just what the future holds for hop growing in this region remains to be seen, but if small breweries come to life in central NY, hop growing may be feasible.

CONGRATULATIONS!

*Town of
Nelson*

200 Years!

From the
Bradstreets

At
“The Farm”

NELSON AND THE WAR OF REBELLION

By Dorene Lyon Setliff with thanks to Sue Greenhagen's Civil War web site, *New York State and The Civil War* at www.morrisville.edu/~greenhsh/

The Town of Nelson archives do not contain much in the way of local information on the Civil War, however, John E. Smith in his book about Madison county (*Our County and Its People*, Boston History Co., 1890) gives us the following introduction to the war:

"On the 15th of April, 1861, the day of the evacuation of Fort Sumter, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 militia for three months service. The quota under this call was 13,280 for this State and it was promptly filled. This call was in itself sufficient evidence the officials in Washington believed the war would be only a summer long conflict. On the 3rd of May another call for troops was issued under which . . . 500,000 men were required. In response to these calls the whole North arose in enthusiasm. Flags leaped from thousands of windows and every hamlet showed its patriotism in numerous enlistments and efforts to provide for the families of the men who marched to the scene of war."

Smith also writes that on July 2, 1862, more men were called to serve by President Lincoln, and the task of enlisting a local regiment was begun. Mass meetings with prominent speakers and collections for the families of the volunteers were held in July and August in Nelson and neighboring towns. By the first of September 1862, the ranks of the 114th Infantry Regiment NYSV (New York State Volunteers) headed by Colonel Elisha B. Smith with recruits from Chenango, Cortland and Madison Counties were filled. Company D of the 114th Regiment was recruited principally from Eaton and Lebanon but included many enlistments from Nelson. (F. Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion*, J.B. Lyon Co., Albany NY, 1912).

Palmer Holdridge was one of the Nelson men who served in the 114th. He was the adopted son of Levi Keith of Nelson and a volunteer in Company D. Leaving behind his wife and infant son, Holdridge accompanied the 114th Regiment to Baltimore in Sept. 1862 where it was assigned guard duty as a result of the Baltimore riots of 1861. At the end of Oct., the 114th was attached to General Nathaniel Banks' Louisiana forces and was shipped from Fortress Monroe, Virginia to Ship Island, Louisiana. "From their arrival in camp, and through their duty at Baltimore and the trip to Ship Island, the 114th Regiment were (sic) afflicted with diarrhea, measles, and diphtheria." Holdridge died at Ship Island on Dec. 2, 1862 (from the *Palmer B. Holdridge Letterbook*, Schoff Civil War Collection, Univ. of Michigan). He was 24 years old and had been in the Union Army for less than five months. During its service, there were nearly 450 casualties in the 114th Regiment, and of these, 170 officers and enlisted men

died from disease (from the 114th NYSV Regimental Archive in *New York in the War of the Rebellion* by Phisterer.).

For the first two years of the War, President Lincoln was able to recruit enough volunteers to fill the ranks of the Union Army. These recruits were usually paid a few hundred dollars (a "bounty") as an incentive to enlist. At a town meeting held Nov 15, 1862 in Nelson (James H. Smith, *History of Madison County New York*, D. Mason & Co., Syracuse NY, 1880), it was voted to raise \$4000 in bonds in order to pay \$200 to each man required to fill the quota of volunteers for the town. In addition to the 114th Regiment, local men served in the 61st NYSV, 91st NYSV and other Regiments including the cavalry. One Nelson man, Ebenezer White, served in Company D., 10th Cavalry and died at age 26 while a prisoner of war in the notorious Andersonville Prison in Georgia and is buried there.

As the war dragged on, the military losses and shortage of volunteers resulted in the first federal draft which was enacted in March 1863 when President Lincoln signed "The Enrollment Act" requiring the enrollment of every male citizen between the ages of 20 and 45. Quotas of new troops were established from each congressional district. According to Joseph Smith, 165 men were enrolled in Nelson and 44 were drafted. However, here, as in the rest of both the North and the South, the draft could be avoided by hiring a substitute or paying a fee of \$300. This led to the charge that the Civil War was "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight" (James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Ballantine Books, NY, 1989). On July 11, 1863, the names of the first draftees in New York City were published in the newspapers alongside long lists of those who had fallen at Gettysburg. The Draft Riots in New York and other cities were a direct result. In Nelson, however, the cash to pay the bounties owed to volunteers and substitutes was again raised by the selling of bonds and the quota was filled and the draft averted. This was true in most districts in the North and few draftees were ever sent to fight.

Another call for troops was made in Dec 1864 and on Jan 10, 1865 the war committee in Nelson was authorized to pay each volunteer \$400 for one year, \$500 for two years and \$600 for three years in order to fill the quota for the town according to James Smith. However, before the latest quotas had to be filled, the glad news of Lee's surrender at Appomattox "came over the wires northward and the same feeling of exultation was felt in every neighborhood, hamlet, village and city." (John E. Smith) The war was over with horrendous losses on both sides.

FROM WILEY RICHARD'S STORE TO THE NELSON INN TO NELSON FARMS

The building on the corner in Nelson village has been transformed many times since its beginnings in the early 19th century. Built as a general store, it became a tavern in the 1870s, and then reverted to its original use when Wellington (Wiley) Richards opened his store. Sold in 1928, it became the Wendell Inn and then later the Nelson Inn. It served up codfish "gravy", hot roast beef sandwiches, macaroni and cheese and more to satisfied customers from all over central New York until just a few years ago when it was purchased by nearby Morrisville College.

Established in 2003, Nelson Farms is now a small-scale food processing plant and retail outlet which is operated under the auspices

of SUNY at Morrisville. It is a "one stop facility for small scale food processors, farmers, growers and producers." Processing equipment, product development and distribution expertise are available to help clients bring their new ideas and old family recipes to market. These same products and many more New York State produced food items are available for purchase by the public. Salad dressings, chili sauce, Finger Lakes coffee ("Jamaican Me Crazy" is a personal favorite), pancake mix, Saranac Root Beer, and cheese are just a few of the items offered which include Morrisville College ice cream.

Wiley Richards would be amazed.



Wiley Richards' Store in Nelson, now Nelson Farms

Congratulations
Town of Nelson

§ § §

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201-YEAR-OLD LYON-RYAN HOUSE

by Denise Earl

Each year, on or about the 4th of July, Veronica and Jim Huftalen of Hardscrabble Road in Erieville, host a family gathering. In July 2006, the couple decided to host their annual gathering with a special theme, their house. It was its 200th birthday.

When settlers came to this area in the late 1700s and bought and cleared their land, they built log homes which could be built quickly with a minimum of tools. After the family's basic needs of food, clothing and shelter were met, some settlers were in a position to concentrate on the construction of more substantial houses. By that time, sawmills provided boards and shingles and frame houses could be built.

This two story house, located on Hardscrabble Road, was one of the first frame houses to be built in the Town of Nelson. Ebenezer Lyon purchased the land in 1793. The deed was recorded in Herkimer County of which the present Madison County was then a part. The deed reads that the land was "conveyed by John Lincklaen and others of Herkimer County and Herman Leroy of New York to Ebenezer Lyon" for 86 pounds. Ebenezer Lyon built the house in 1806, 13 years later. He lived there with his wife,



Lyon House on Hardscrabble Road around 1906

Chloe, for the rest of his life. According to L.M. Hammond's book *History of Madison County, State of New York*, (Truair, Smith & Co., Syracuse, 1872), Judge Lyon's house was one of three "mansions" built when the country was new and which were still standing in 1872. The other two belonged to the Card and Burton families.

The Lyon property remained in the family for three generations passing from Ebenezer Lyon to Eliphus Lyon to William Wallace Lyon. In 1906, the Lyon family sold the property to John Ryan. Three generations of Ryans have now occupied the house. From John Ryan, the property went to Edward Ryan. Edward's daughter Veronica and her husband, Jim Huftalen, live there now.



Wakefield Store in Nelson

N.F. Freeborn Store, Erieville in 1908



THE STORY OF MY LIFE IN NELSON

by Betty Bachman McEvers

My parents, Edward and Mabel Bachman moved to Madison County in March 1920 from Cedar Rapids Iowa after Dad made a trip out to visit friends who had moved here. He liked New York, and so decided it was a good place to raise his family, a 5 year old daughter (Fay Bachman Davies) and 8-year old twin sons (Lewis and Lester). He bought a farm from Frank Hamilton, a mile north of Nelson. I was born in December 1920. On Jan. 27, 1921, our home was destroyed by fire which started around the chimney. The fire department misunderstood our name, took the wrong road and got stuck in the snow. The neighbors were able to save several things, even a couple doors. They carried out Mom's china cabinet, laid it down carefully in the snow and threw a rug over. Somebody brought a door out and laid it on top of the cabinet and the knob went through the front glass. Not to worry, none of the beautiful dishes were broken. I have the china cabinet with all the dishes.

The Davies family lived just north of us. They took Fay and me, and, I think, Lewis and Lester to their house. John Richards owned a house just south of Nelson, across the creek. The family was moved in there and on April 1st we moved back to the farm into living quarters that had been prepared over the garage. Work started right away cleaning up the remnants. Lumber was sawed for the new house at Hill and Whipple Sawmill, about a mile north of us. On Nov. 11, 1921, we moved into the new house which was heated by a wood furnace. (This house, on Nelson Rd., is currently owned by Jim and Beverly Buck who bought it from the Bachmans in 1964).

We walked to school in Nelson. We had lots of rides as the farmers took their milk to the Nelson Cheese Factory. Dad drove our pony on a milk cart and the others drove their teams. When the snow was too deep, Dad drove the team on the bobsled. Mom and Dad attended the Methodist Church in Nelson and Fay and the boys went to Sunday school. Until I was about five, the folks left me with neighbors, Ed and Lulu Jones (Joner and Aunt Lulu to me) who lived north of Nelson. They were like grandparents to me; mine were all in Iowa. I went to Sunday school when I was five and joined the choir when I was ten.

We four Bachman kids were a quartet until the boys left for college in Kentucky. Then, Fay and I were a duet. Mom joined us sometimes for a trio. We were a musical family. When we were all home, we would all stand around the piano, which Mom played, and sing hymns before we went to bed.

We were close friends with the Davies boys, Fay, Harold and Art. They had a big toboggan. What fun! They had some friends from Cazenovia who came out and together they built a glider. They would launch from the top of the hill, holding the glider in the air and just one guy would start running down the hill until he was airborne. He sailed a

little way and then landed, usually on his feet! I loved those guys, they were like big brothers. Sister Fay married Harold in 1937.

The one room school was just west of Nelson. The school was heated by a coal stove in the middle of the room. There was a bench up in front of the teacher's desk where each grade was seated for instruction. There was a big blackboard, and we took turns taking the erasers outside to pound the chalk dust out of them. My first teacher was Anna English, Joner and Aunt Lulu's niece, whom I knew well, then Rachel Scott from Cazenovia, Dolly Barrett and Mrs. Tyler, wife of District Superintendent A.I. Tyler.

Bert and Ethel McEvers moved to NY State and bought a farm in Fenner about 3 miles north of ours. My folks knew them so they visited back and forth quite a bit. They had two sons, Harry and Archie, who had their drivers' licenses so they went out a lot, mostly to dances. After high school, I worked in Cazenovia and Archie would stop in to see me. On Aug. 7, 1940, we were married at the Nelson Methodist Church. The reception was at Mom and Dad's. We left for our honeymoon at 2:30, heading for Iowa to get acquainted with uncles, aunts and cousins, whom we had never seen. In those days, you had to keep your "get away" secret or your good friends (?) would play tricks on you!

Oh - I knew I'd forgotten something. When I stayed with Joner and Aunt Lulu, he brought me home in his Model T. Ford. When I was big enough, he held me on his lap and I steered the car. When my legs got long enough, I sat in the driver's seat and drove the car. Dad had an old station wagon of some sort. It had a wooden body. Fay and I would get it out of the garage when the folks weren't home, and drive it around the driveways and sometimes in the field. The first "shift car" we had was a 1932 Chevy. That's what I drove when I got my driver's license in 1937.

GOOD COOK'S COOKIES TAKE PRIZE AT FAIR

Cazenovia Republican, Sept, 1978

Henrietta Ungleich of Nelson won second prize for her refrigerator pinwheel cookies at the New York State Fair's Culinary Arts Competition. There were 393 entries.

It's not the only prize that Mrs. Ungleich has collected at the fair.

"In 1958, I got a first for my cherry pie and Gov. Averell Harriman ate it!" she said. "I was his guest at a luncheon at the fair and he really enjoyed that pie."

“WOODY” AND THE NELSON JUNIOR BASEBALL TEAM

by Ron Davies

Over the years, while growing up in Nelson, I had always dreamed of a successful Little League baseball team. In the late 1970s and '80s, the Town of Nelson had a very good Junior League which won its share of championships.

I began assisting Leroy Woodworth, “Woody” to most who knew him, with a group of kids at the Nelson ball field. We entered the Snow Belt League and the Junior League (kids from 10-13). During the first few years in the league, we were “doormats” but with every passing year our win/loss record improved. The teams in the league were from Cazenovia, South Otselic, Truxton, Georgetown, DeRuyter, Marathon, Cuyler and Nelson. There may even have been more towns.

Now a little about “Woody” and the team. First of all, you had to know “Woody”; coaching with him was a great experience. He knew how to get the most and best out of each kid. Our team consisted of players from Nelson, Morrisville, Erieville, Fenner and Perryville.

“Woody” and I worked with those kids from April, as soon as the field was dry, until the middle of August, holding two and three practices a week, even during the season when we played a game or two a week. “Woody” would tell the kids that there would be ice cream at his house after each win. It didn't take the players long to start improving their game and pick up some wins.

I believe that the most memorable season was the season of 1984. The team had been together since the “Pee-Wee” years so they were “all on the same page”, so to speak, as



Ruth & “Woody” Woodworth

far as experience goes. We went through the season undefeated. In fact, this team was so good, that we were beating teams most every game by the 15 run rule (If you got ahead by 15 runs, the game was over). We went to the DeRuyter Field Days in August and beat the team from Cazenovia, 14 to 3. We had both boys and girls on the team and our rule was that everyone played in every game, and we stood by that rule.

We had other championships over the years; 1989 was another championship year.

It was an honor and a privilege to assist “Woody” with the team. He loved the game of baseball, and he loved kids. If some youngster had a hard time hitting or catching, he would take him aside and work with him one-on-one. He showed no favoritism. “Woody” and his wife, Ruth, were very supportive of each kid, attended every game, cheered on each child. They were both wonderful role models. I am glad that the Town of Nelson thought enough of “Woody” to name the ball field in his honor.

THE ERIEVILLE HOTEL

by David Penoyer from the *Cazenovia Republican*, Jan. 5, 1939 and Jan. 26, 1939



Erieville Hotel, Main St., note horse and buggy.

In Jan. 1939, Daisy Griffin Frances wrote about the Erieville Hotel, which had recently burned, for the Lecturer's program at the Erieville Grange. A tavern built by Ephraim Mallory was originally located on the site of the Erieville Hotel on the four corners in Erieville. That was torn down to make way for the Erieville House (or Hotel) built by Thomas Medbury in 1820. Mr. Medbury was the Post Master at that time; the Post Office was in the hotel. H.L. Griffin, Daisy Francis' father, bought the hotel in 1871 and the Griffin family lived there. In July 1884, hay in a nearby barn caught fire, apparently from a spark from “Mr. Kelly's sawmill”. Daisy goes on to write that “in 20 minutes every thing was in ruins. Only a few

things were saved. Our horses were saved as they had carried the Sunday School children to the Temple for a picnic. There was a high wind. It was thought at one time that the whole town would be wiped out as 57 fires started from this one.”

Daisy herself was ill with measles and was carried from place to place as each place caught fire. After the fire, the Griffins lived in another property which they owned until one year later when Mr. Griffin had rebuilt the hotel on the same site.

While Mr. Griffin owned the hotel, he held two large dances every year, on July 4 and at Christmas. People came from long distances to attend the dances. Daisy describes it: “Eighty four couples dancing at once in the

Continued on next page



The Rivenburgh children in front of the old Nelson Flats School.
Front: Roxanna & Nancy, Back: Shirley & Bill.

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EVAN D. DAVIS AND EVAN M. JONES COME TO NELSON

by Dorene Lyon Setliff

Times were hard in Wales when Evan D. Davis (spelled Davies in Wales, both of which imply "son of David") came to America in 1866 at the age of 41. He crossed the ocean on a sailing ship which took six long weeks with food and other supplies barely lasting the trip. After experiencing the freedom and the opportunities available in the United States, Evan went back to Llanegryn (a word pronounceable only by a Welsh speaker) in North Wales the next year to get his family.

In 1867, Evan, his wife Ellen Thomas, and their three children: Evan, 9-years-old; Jane 8-years-old; and Hugh Thomas, 18-months-old, sailed west on the "City of Paris", a ship of the Inman Line. This trip took 12 days. Upon arriving in New York City, the family traveled either by train or the Erie Canal to Canastota (there is a discrepancy in family records), their destination being Nelson which already had a substantial Welsh population. In Canastota, they found that the stage coach to Peterboro wasn't leaving until the next day, and not having enough money to stay in a hotel, they started walking. They stopped to rest at the Howell's farm in Pleasant Valley. Not knowing English (the parents could not read or write), they asked Mr. Howell the distance to Nelson in Welsh. Much to their amazement, they had stopped at a Welsh speaker's farm, and Mr. Howell gave them a place to stay overnight and took them to Nelson the next day.

Evan became a farmer in Nelson, living on a farm above and east of the Tog Hill Tavern. Ellen was a very active member of the Welsh Congregational Church in East Nelson and a very religious person. She prepared the whole Sunday dinner on Saturday afternoon as she didn't want to do any more work than necessary on the Sabbath. Their son, Hugh Thomas Davis, grew up in Nelson. His name appears again near the end of this account.

Earlier, around 1857, another Evan, Evan M. Jones, had come to Nelson from Wales at the age of 18. He had found it very difficult to earn a living in Wales; he did odd jobs until he had saved enough money to book passage from Liverpool to New York City and to take the train to Utica. He also spoke no English and had no money when he arrived, but he walked from Utica to Sheds where he met his sister who had immigrated earlier. He worked 6 years on neighboring farms and saved enough money to buy a farm south of Erieville on the Dugway Road. Around 1863, he married Margaret Morris (daughter of yet another Evan, Evan Morris). They had four sons including Griffith Burdette, who changed his name to Bert (the father of David Jones, still living on Jones Road) and one daughter, Jennie M. Jones who was born in 1867.

In 1877, Evan M. Jones and Margaret bought the Jones homestead on Jones Road from the Knox family who had owned it for three generations. Sadly, Margaret died in 1880 two weeks after giving birth to the youngest son, David. Their daughter, Jennie M. Jones, then 13 years old, took over the running of the household. According to a history written by Jennie's daughter, Harriet Jones, Jennie "was obliged to learn to cook, sew and do all other household duties. She kept house for her Dad and four brothers until she was married in 1888. During that time she made all of the overalls and farm frocks (ed. note: a farm frock is a work coat) for her Dad and brothers."

Jennie's father, Evan M. Jones returned to Wales once after immigrating to the US. According to the Cazenovia Republican, he left Nelson on Dec. 4, 1884 and returned in April 1884. On his return trip, he brought back a set of blue and white dishes to give to his only daughter. According to family legend, the boat developed a leak and the cargo was thrown overboard to lighten the load but he saved six

cups and saucers for Jennie who later gave each of her six children a cup and saucer. Beverly Buck has one such cup handed down through the family.

In 1888, Jennie M. Jones married Hugh Thomas Davis (introduced earlier). The marriage took place at the home of her father on Jones Road. According to a contemporary newspaper article, "they were married by Rev. Jeffrey Evans after which all partook of a bountiful repast which had been prepared for the occasion. The young couple left for Utica amid an avalanche of old shoes and best wishes. ...The presents were useful and handsome." A list follows of everything they received and from whom, including bedspreads, tablespreads, pillow shams, tea urn and pitcher, platter and tureen, two lamps, a half dozen silver teaspoons, 50 yards of sheeting and a bed tick, three washbowl and pitcher sets, a bread and milk set, one dozen napkins, and a sewing machine from the bride's father.

The newlyweds, Jennie and Hugh Thomas Davis, soon rented a small farm on the Hardscrabble Road near Erieville. Hugh became known as "Doc" because he had a natural instinct for taking care of farm animals. They later moved to a farm near the Welsh Church. One daughter, Margaret, was born in Nelson.

Around 1895, the family moved to Pleasant Valley. Three more daughters were born and two sons. One of their sons, Hugh T. Davis Sr. served as a supervisor of the Town of Nelson



*Hugh Thomas Davis and
Jennie Morris Jones Davis*

from 1960 to 1969. His son, Hugh T. Davis Jr. (Tom) now runs the family farm, one of the few remaining dairy farms in Nelson. It is located at the corner of Pleasant Valley and Stone Bridge Roads.

This story of these Welsh families in the Town of Nelson is typical of the many immigrants who came here from Wales in the mid 1800s. Many members of the Davis, Jones and Morris families are buried in the Welsh Cemetery.

[Mostly taken from written records left by Jennie's daughters, Margaret Brooks and Harriet Jones, with additional research provided by Donna Burdick.]

ERIEVILLE HOTEL

Continued from previous page

square dances with many spectators sitting around one large room which covered the whole house except the part on the west side without a post or obstruction of any kind and the best music that could be obtained. My mother prepared the elaborate suppers, commencing to serve about 10 or 11 o'clock and extending until 2 or 3 in the morning when all were served."

Following her father's death in 1895, Daisy and her mother operated the hotel until Mrs. Griffin died in 1904. Daisy continued to run the operation ("strictly temperance") until her marriage in 1905. Edwin Hart bought the hotel that year. Daisy remembered "this was in the horse and buggy days and we had a very prosperous town, with many trains. Agents and others came regularly for meals and to stay for the night or longer. When I sold, there were still those who had been coming for about 34 years to our Erieville Hotel, widely known as the 'Griffin Hotel'. Mr. Hart took out a license (for alcohol) the year he bought it." After several owners made changes to the first floor and veranda, it was purchased by Frank Blair, and by 1939 it was leased and operated by Jack Hosid.

A public dance had just been held on a Friday evening, Jan. 4, 1939, but the hotel was empty on Jan. 5 when a neighbor, Mrs. Charles Spaulding, saw that the hotel was on fire. Mr. Spaulding turned in the alarm, but both the first and second stories of the hotel

were already involved. Fire Chief Wesley Sternburg, whose house was directly across the street from the blaze, was very concerned that the fire not spread to nearby structures. As Chief Sternburg related, the hotel went up like a matchbox as it was constructed of hemlock, being at that time 54 years old. A contemporary news article in the Cazenovia Republican stated that the heat from the blaze was terrific and had the effect of keeping the fireman back and also broke windows in nearby structures. The New Woodstock Fire Department also responded to the blaze, and the two departments dropped their pumper lines into the creek at the foot of the hill along Damon Hill-Eatonbrook Road, just east of the stricken hotel. The water supply was pumped dry two or three times. Water ran back down the hill from the blaze into the creek and was repumped to the scene of the fire.

The loss was estimated at \$5,000 and it was noted that a building on this site had burned to the ground 54 years prior. As Daisy Griffin Francis said, "Thanks to our own Fire Department and the New Woodstock Department and lack of wind, the town and the hotel barn were saved."

It would be a treat to see that imposing three story building standing on the corner in Erieville now.

Congratulations Town of Nelson



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Town of Nelson

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