Volume 4, Issue 4

Sheldon Historical Society Schoolhouse Museum Newsletter

December 2015

An update on our progress as a Society and a Chartered Museum "A New Look at Old News From our Town"

Welcome to the final edition of our newsletter for 2015. We want to thank everyone for their support and for joining us in our quest to preserve the history of our town. Although we will take a break in our meetings for a short time, we will continue to help you with family or local history needs and will be available to open up the museum for visitors, upon request. Please join us for our next meeting on Thursday, February 18, 2016.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Recently we had an interesting artifact donated to our museum, an old umbrella which advertised a business from long ago. As we looked it over and speculated about its history, we realized that none of us knew!

So we called on Anita Ripstein-Hayes, our former Town of Sheldon Historian & co-editor of Historical Wyoming, and here is their story.

The Story of Marzolf and Mason

The story begins in County Wicklow, Ireland, with a young man's dream of coming to America. In 1837, Thomas William Mason immigrated to Galena, Illinois, where he found employment in the zinc and lead mines being established in the area. Two years later he returned to his native country to bring his future wife back to America. In the spring of 1840, Thomas W. Mason and Mary Anne Kavanagh (born County Wexford, Ireland), daughter of Darby and Mary Kavanagh (Cavanaugh) were married in New York City. Knowing of an Irish settlement within Wyoming County, New York, they traveled to the Town of Wethersfield, settling on a 100 acre farm, paying nine dollars an acre. Eventually Mary Ann's sister Margaret and her husband, Thomas Ralph and their brother Charles Kavanagh would join the family in Wyoming County.

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Thomas W. and Mary Ann Mason raised seven children – Thomas, John Edwin, James A., Mary Ann, Catharine, Elizabeth Jane & Charles Augustine. Thomas Sr. died in January 1863 at the age of 54, leaving his sons to carry on the farm. The years following the Civil War were not kind to the history of the family, nor to the operation of the family farm. By the end of the 1870's, only John Edwin and Charles A. survived.

John Edwin Mason, born October 25, 1842 in the Town of Wethersfield, Wyoming County, New York, left the family farm shortly after the death of his father. At the time work could be found further west in Saginaw, Michigan, where others from the area had removed. There he was employed in a saw mill for approximately sixteen months, when he returned to the family farm. It is very possible he was called home by the death of his brother James in April 1865 to aid his older brother Thomas and his mother on the farm. With all stable, he again ventured out on his own and in 1869 went to Chicago. It is believed relatives were living in this area, as the family had close ties to Chicago for many years. In Chicago he began work as a carpenter and painter but then acquired a position in the fancy bakery and confectionary of Robert H. Fish, in whose home he resided. His marriage certificate from Cook County, Illinois states he was married at the age of 29 years on April 25, 1876 to Miss Eva K. Bald, who was 19 years old. Actually John was 33 years old at the time of his marriage to the daughter of Adam Bald and Margaret Joachim.

In May 1876, John with his bride returned to Wyoming County to spend the rest of their lives. By this date his mother, brothers Thomas Jr. and James A. Mason, sisters Mary Ann Norton, Catharine Mason & Elizabeth Jane Gillespie, had all died. Only his brother Charles A. was still living. It is unknown where the young couple resided or what happened to the family farm. But in 1877 John E. Mason began his hardware establishment in North Java at the northeast corner of Rt. 98 and Wethersfield Road.

On June 22, 1877, Addison M. Smith and John E. Mason, known as Smith and Mason, purchased the property from Loraine C.(Ives) Fox. Mrs. Fox's husband was Eugene R. Fox, wagon maker in North Java. Previously they had acquired the property from the estate of Sylvester Rudd, who conducted a cooper shop on the property. It is unknown if Smith and Mason erected a building to house their hardware within or enlarged the cooper shop of Mr. Rudd.

On July 19, 1879, Addison M. Smith sold his half interest in the firm to John E. Mason. Shortly after, Thomas Henry Crahan, another Irish son, joined Mason in the firm known as Mason & Crahan. For over 20 years, these two men created one of the largest, most prosperous hardware businesses known throughout Wyoming Co.

The newspapers of May 1898 carried the account of the only robbery occurring in the hardware firm of Mason and Crahan. One early morning as Thomas Crahan was returning home about 2 AM from the local hotel and approaching the hardware store, he noted a man exited the establishment and raced down the back yard. Not noting a stiff thorn bush, the man ran into it and was thrown down. When he extricated himself and started to run again, Crahan fired his revolver at the man and the robber fell to the ground, dropping his own revolver. Before he could rise, Crahan had him captured. The robber had pocketed $2.75 in cash, a razor, cigars and pocket knives. Thomas Carr of Michigan was booked into Wyoming County jail, where it was learned he was wanted for numerous robberies throughout the county.

In June 1899, Crahan left the partnership to join another firm with P.A. Gaffney in a dry goods store in North Java. Just a year later this partnership was also dissolved. It is believed about this time period, the surviving brothers, John E. and Charles A. Mason formed the firm of the Mason Bros. to operate the hardware business. This association lasted but a brief time.

Just as life began to become easier for John E. Mason, tragedy struck the family again. His beloved wife Eva died in 1883 at the age of 26 years old. She left three small children: Ellen Barbara(called Nellie B.), Catharine and Charles Edwin, who was not yet 3 years old. Eva is buried in St. Patrick's RC Cemetery in Java Village with other members of the Mason family. The following year, John E. remarried to Miss Mary Ann Flattery, a daughter of James and Eliza (Glavey) Flattery. Three more children were added to the family: Elizabeth, James Thomas and Mary Genevieve. A new home was built near the hardware in that same year, which stands today.

It was during this period of his life that John E. Mason was a busy man. He not only was the senior partner of a large established hardware business, but was involved in the politics of the day, serving as Town Supervisor for five years, Postmaster for four years, Notary Public for 16 years, and candidate for NYS

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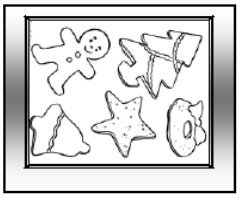
"The Real Spirit of Christmas"
Behind the closed parlor doors

Christmas is getting closer and it is time to stir up the fruitcake so it has ample time to mellow. I always follow the recipe from my *Aunt Maybelle; it makes a huge batch and she has adjusted just the right amount of brandy, rum, and whiskey to make the perfect holiday treat. It makes eight yummy loaves, (not the kind you toss,) and we share the tins. I frantically called around looking for the pans; getting a bit nervous. It took a while to locate them but they are all made now and wrapped tightly to get the best flavor by Christmas. It also took a bit of self control not to sample the spirits too often. That had to wait!!



Grandma George (Mary Romesser) always shared a set of cookie cutters, handcrafted from tin, of many shapes and sizes, with other members of the George family. They did not all have a set, so they passed them around. Grandfather Jacob must have got out the horse and sleigh and picked them up for Grandma. I wonder if she calmly located the shapely tin cutters, or if I inherited a bit of her anxiety as the Holidays approached. Grandma always made the best frosted *Christmas cookies'.

It also brought back memories of the story I have often been told of the Christmas Grandma and Grandpa George, the late Jacob and Mary, told their seven children that there would be no gifts this particular year. They awoke early on Christmas morn; snuggled warmly under the quilts their Mom had made, and felt a real happiness. It was the day they waited patiently for each year, the baby Jesus was born; and then they remembered about the gifts. However it did not hamper their joy, and they scampered down the stairway, that was covered with a broadloom carpet, and quietly peeked into the dining room. They were totally surprised as they saw the table set with Grandma's finest china and on each plate was a big orange, some nuts and a large specially decorated cookie placed on each. They were all elated, and it was going to be the best Holiday yet. They would savor the cookie and make it last, wondering how their Mom or Santa had time to make these cookies, and where were these cookie cutters now?

They looked forward to attending morning Mass at St. Cecelia's, in Sheldon, N.Y., the Cathedral in the woods, and visiting the manger scene. Grandfather must have got the sleigh ready, and after Mass they would return for the festivities of the day. The joy in their hearts was high, as everyone greeted them with a joyous Christmas wish. They were dressed warm and the snow glistened as it fell on their woolen coats that were made by their mother and handed down from one child to the next. They looked with wonder at how beautiful the Church was decorated, but mostly at the baby Jesus in the manger. As they headed home Grandpa lifted his hat to everyone he met, and the children had visions of that large frosted Christmas cookie that Santa had bought.

Grandpa Jake had a bit of humor about him, and when they walked into the house, he stoked the wood in the potbelly stove to kindle the wood; it was going to be a day of warmth and laughter. He then led the children into the parlor. This room was only used for special occasions, and for the unthinkable, when they lost a family member. The children peeked in, and what to their wondering eyes should appear, but a Christmas tree with a gift for each one underneath. It was the best Christmas ever, but the true spirit of the day was waking and knowing that this was the day the Christ Child was born

The Holidays were such a special time. It was a week that neighbors visited each other and enjoyed the homemade delicacies. The fruitcake and cookies were passed, along with maybe a bit of wine. There were always the homemade yeast breads to have and the house was filled with the aroma of fresh baked bread. In order to truly enjoy the Holidays we must step back and think of what it is truly about, have time for each other, and do away with the materialism that has crept into the season. If only we had to look for the Christmas cookie cutters again, if the little things in life were treasures and the hustle and bustle of this world slowed down, the Season would be different.

"Merry Christmas to you all and a Happy New Year."
December 2015 By Mary Ann (Schiltz) Metzger

Look for Grandma's cookie recipe and Aunt Maybelle's fruit cake recipe in this newsletter. There is still time to let it mellow. And also to sample spirits, after all it is Christmas.

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Assemblyman, and was promoting the establishment of a new Catholic church within the hamlet. He was a Democrat through and through.

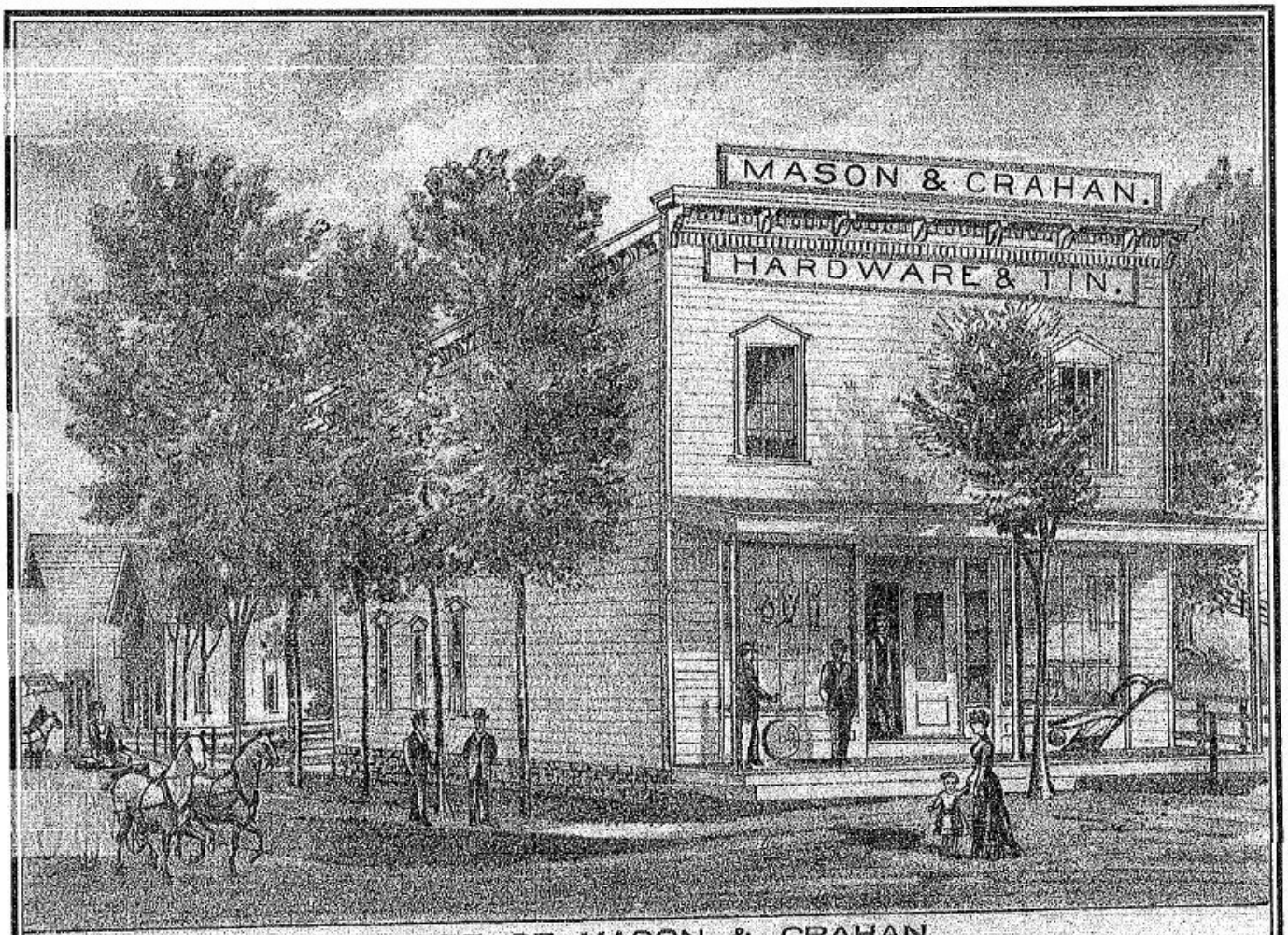
During one presidential election year, Liberty Poles were erected in the hamlet. The Democrats raised one in front of the Mason & Crahan Hardware. The Prohibition Party put one up in front of the Allen's furniture store. North Java was also known for pranks on Halloween. On the morning after one Halloween, the poles had been "decorated". A wagon hung on the Prohibition pole, while a beer keg hung on the pole in front of the old hardware store.

During this same time period, a young man named Bernard Aloysius Marzolf was employed in a hardware business in the village of Strykersville. He was born Feb 5, 1874, son of James and Mary A. (Staebel) Marzolf. His dream was to become a hardware businessman.

He eventually became partner in the firm of Dellinger and Marzolf in Strykersville, but sold his share in 1903. On June 23, 1905, John E. Mason and Charles A. Mason sold their business in North Java to Bernard A. Marzolf and Charles E. Mason (son of John E.) and the firm of Marzolf and Mason was born.

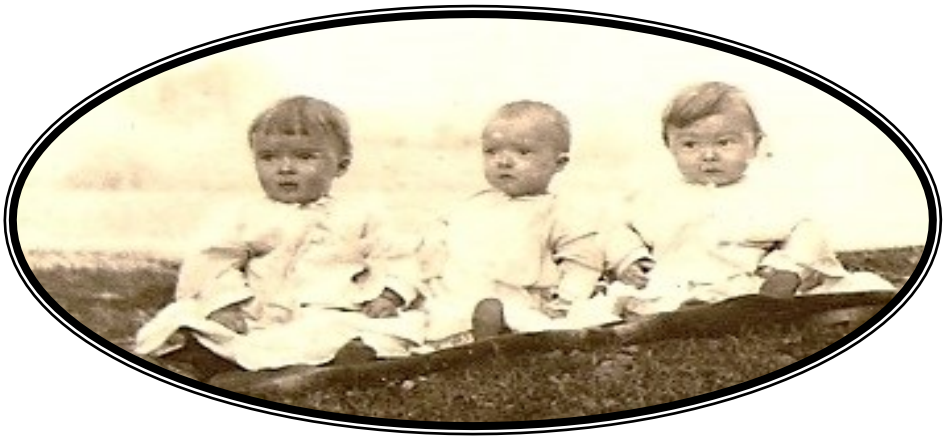
John Edwin Mason died suddenly upon rising from his bed on July 3, 1910. His death was a shock to his community and all his associates throughout Western New York. His funeral Mass conducted in St. Nicholas R.C. Church in North Java was a unique tribute to the man who gave his all to have this beautiful church erected. He, along with his wife Mary, is buried in his beloved church's cemetery.

Charles E. Mason was born June 3, 1880, in North Java. At the age of nineteen years (1899) he became editor of the Javan Democrat, of which J.H. Herman was the publisher. Like his father he was involved in politics and also was elected Town Supervisor but did not finish his



STORE OF MASON & CRAHAN.
Dealers in Hardware, Iron and Stoves, Paints, Oils, Glass, Agricultural Implements, Silver-Plated Ware and Guns. Manufacturers of Copper, Tin and Sheet Iron Ware.
NORTH JAVA, N.Y.

The Marzolf Triplets: Florence, Wilson and Bernard Jr.



term, as he resigned in 1919. Throughout his life he was drawn to Chicago and in March 1919 he left North Java to make his home in that city, living with his cousins and his uncle Adam G. Bald. His visits to his roots in North Java were published regularly in the local papers.

While in business with B.A. Marzolf he met his future wife, Miss Della M. Glaser, daughter of prominent hotel keeper Frank Glaser of Strykersville and his wife Margaret Metzger. (Della was the sister of Mrs. B.A. Marzolf.) But their marriage would not take place until Oct. 18, 1927. Charles E. Mason died in Chicago on May 31, 1941. His funeral in St. Nicholas RC Church was largely attended by his friends and a family from Wyoming County and Chicago. He is buried in St. Mary's R.C. Cemetery in Strykersville along with his wife Della, who died also in Chicago on Nov. 1, 1966. Bernard A. Marzolf had achieved his dream of owning his own hardware business. Three years after their purchase, a tin shop was built onto the hardware. It was also was in March of this year that B.A. married Miss Louise M. "Lula" Glaser, daughter of Frank Glaser and Margaret Metzger of Strykersville. Known as Lula, she was born August 5, 1872 at Straub's Corners, Town of Sheldon. As previously stated, Frank Glaser was a noted hotel keeper in the Town of Sheldon, owning hotels in Sheldon Center, Straub's Corners and Strykersville. He also owned and operated a brewery in Strykersville, which burned, along with his hotel, on August 13, 1909.

Bernard and Lula Marzolf would have four children born of their union. Three of these births would be noted throughout the newspapers of Western New York. The Marzolf Triplets were born Feb 24, 1913;
Florence G., Wilson Francis and Bernard Jr. At the time, the millionaire Iron Master, Andrew Carnegie, sent each of the newborn babies $500 and gave to them and their mother, railroad passes good for any railroad in the country for their entire lives. The babies' photo was published throughout the country in various newspapers of the day. Wilson Francis Marzolf was killed during World War II. Bernard A. Marzolf operated the hardware establishment alone until his death on January 21, 1929 at the age of 54.

His wife had died previously on Nov. 30, 1926. Their orphaned children removed to Strykersville to be raised by their step-grandmother Cecilia Martin Glaser.

The estate was forced to sell the hardware store. Leo Kirsch was to become the new owner, but in November 1932 the store returned to the Marzolf family.

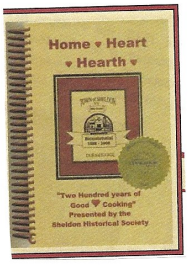
Luella Marzolf, oldest child and daughter of Bernard A. and his wife Lula, was born July 23, 1910. On Wednesday June 8, 1932 Luella was married at St. Mary's RC Church, Strykersville to Mr. Edward J. George of the Town of Bennington. That November they took possession of her father's former hardware in North Java. Sometime following World War II a new block building was erected upon the site and the old hardware building passed into history. Ed and Luella operated their hardware and farm implement establishment until 1956 when they sold out to David Ortner and removed from North Java. It was at about this time, my parents also left North Java, but the memories of the hamlet remain in my mind.

Today the site is the location of the North Java Post Office. Descendants of John E. Mason still reside in the area in the family members of his daughter Catharine R. Mason, who married John Francis Reisdorf, the founder of the Reisdorf Feed Mill.

By Anita Ripstein-Hayes, Historian

Author's note: ***As a small child I once lived in the hamlet of North Java. My parents, William and Helen Gephart, operated the only grocery store in "town". I would listen to the people who entered the store telling my Dad about how North Java once was. Also at the time the post office was located in our same building and I would spend time with the post mistress, Miss Mabel Herman and often visited her mother who lived next door. They would tell me about life in North Java. After I entered the historical field years later, I began to research the place I once called home.***

"I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"
– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



"I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."
– Charles Dickens

We are almost sold out of our award winning Bicentennial Cookbooks, so don't miss out!

A special "Thank You" to Anita Ripstein-Hayes, Scott Barvian and Connie Luker for contributing such great articles to our recent newsletters. We look forward to hearing from them again, and encourage any of our readers to send us a story. We know you all have a story!

Coming Soon:

A Short History of Varysburg, cont.

Who Was E.K. Cooper?

Research History of your home
A Journey from Talheim

RECIPE CORNER

Grandma George's Sugar Cookies

1 cups sugar
1 cup shortening
3 eggs
1 cup sour cream
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
4 cups flour (might need to add more when rolling it out, to make the dough stiff enough to roll)
1 tsp. vanilla
Directions:
Cream sugar and shortening, add eggs, mix well, then add sour cream and mix well.
Add the remaining ingredients.
Make into 4 balls and refrigerate for 1 hour or more.
Roll out cookies and cut out with cookie cutters.
When ready to bake, preheat oven to 350 degrees.
Bake Time: 8-10 minutes
Frost and decorate when they are cool.
Frosting:
1 1/2 cups confectioner's sugar
3 tbsp. butter, softened
1 tbsp. vanilla
1 tbsp. milk
Combine all till creamy. Thin with a few drops of milk.

"Oh, my! It's fruitcake weather, Buddy!"

~ A Christmas Memory, by Truman Capote

Aunt Maybelle's Fruit Cake (White)

Cream together:
1 lb. butter
1 lb. 10x confectioner's sugar
3 Tbsp. Milk
1 Tbsp. each of rum and brandy flavoring
10 eggs, stir in one at a time.
Add:
4 cups flour sifted with
1 tsp. each baking powder and salt
Stir in 1 1/4 lbs red and green candied cherries
1 ¼ lbs. candied pineapple
(Soak fruit overnight ahead of time with ½ cup liquor)
2 lbs. white raisins
1 lb. pecans and 1 lb. walnuts, chopped
Grease pans & line with foil.
Fill tins ¾ full – makes several tins, depending on size
Bake 1 ½ hours @ 275 degrees.
(Put pan of water in oven on rack under cake)
For a few weeks spray tops of cakes occasionally with a mixture of ½ cup brandy, ½ cup rum & 1 Tbsp. each of rum and brandy extract. Wrap & keep in a cool place.
This recipe was made by many Sheldon cooks, with their own variations. It originated from Aunt Leona's 100 yr. old fruitcake recipe, which can be found in our cookbook, along with 6 pages of fruitcake recipes!

"May God bless all those away, as the Season does draw near.
It is because of the deeds they do, that we can live without the fear."

Christmas in the Military
Alone for the Holidays

"I'll be home for Christmas" is a favorite hymn sung during the Holiday Season. People are calling for air flights, making plans to travel to be with loved ones, and planning gala events with families. Although thoughts of home prevail there are many who will not be home because of the love they have for their country and their desire to do their part by serving in the military. Most heartbreaking are those who have given their lives. The holidays have always been a difficult time for those away and the loved ones who remain at home; I, too, have been touched.

A Long, Long Hike

It was 1969 and John Davis was hanging out in the barracks in a little town in Budingen, Germany. He was in an old WW 11 German quarters with three other men. It was the week before Christmas and thoughts of home filled his mind. John was from the small community of Strykersville, N.Y., a very rural area, but the bonds to home were strong. All of the men had a week off for the Holidays, either before or after Christmas. His was before, but this year he would not be able to join those at home. Startled he looked up and saw a familiar face, a man in an Army uniform walked into his room, looking tired but still energized. "Oh my gosh!" he said, it is Pete." That man was my brother the late Peter G. Schiltz, *(picture attached leaving home for Germany)* also from the same hometown. He was stationed near Frankfurt, Germany and had heard his best friend from home was somewhere near. Peter also had thoughts of home, especially at this time of year and was more than a bit homesick. For two days he walked, approximately fifty five miles, to try and locate his buddy. His words were choked when he tried to talk to him. Needless to say the next few days there was a lot of celebrating going on as they talked about their jobs and of their small hometown. When the stay was over, a friend drove him back to his base in an old Opal; he did not have to walk. This car had seen better days; some of Johns' friends had put a new engine from a junk yard in it. They used a gun tube from a tank like a crane to lift the engine. Well, boys will be boys and soldiers will be soldiers.

When I talked recently to my brother's friend John, we both left our conversation with a teary eye. Perhaps it is because this year so many young boys won't be home for the Holidays, and will feel as my brother did in a place so far from home. Or maybe it was the final destination of violence Peter faced in his life years after serving in the Viet Nam war era; he has now been deceased for thirty years. Finding his friend John was a great Christmas gift for him that year in 1969. If he were here he would tell the story over again at the Holidays, as he never forgot this encounter.

Submitted by Mary Ann Metzger

A Military Christmas

I won't be "Home for Christmas";
but kindly keep me in your prayers.
It will be lonesome without you;
but it helps to know someone cares!

It's for all of you that I am here;
I will serve my country and do my best.
And follow commands of those above;
God will help me do the rest.

I'd like to sit by the fireside;
and put the garland on the tree.
But I want to give and do my share;
I want to keep our nation free.

An emptiness I harbor;
the endless days we are apart.
Just keep in mind I love you;
and will keep you in my heart.

Look to the Star in the East;
And hopefully another year.
Peace will come and settle in;
the world will take away the fear.
For all those away this Christmas Season

By Mary Ann Metzger

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Sheldon Historical Society Officers:
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Secretary - Jeanne Mest
Financial Secretary - Donna Kirsch
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Elizabeth Reisdorf, Elaine Almeter,
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Classroom Curator - Elizabeth Reisdorf
Archival Curator - Jeanne Mest
Museum Curator - Marilyn Smithley

Newsletter compiled by Mary Ann Metzger and Jeanne Mest, with the help of many volunteers. Submissions are welcome, Send to the email above, or call (716) 474-3156 for information.

The Historical Society welcomes new members! If you find local History interesting, we hope that you make a membership contribution and join us. It is open to anyone with an interest in the history of Sheldon, or a desire to volunteer services, without restriction to age or place of residence. We maintain a School House Museum that is state chartered. There is always work to do to maintain this structure and to continue our research of data and archives and preserve treasured artifacts.

Thank you to Julia Ferrini, Wyoming County Free Press, for allowing us to publish her photo of the fire in Varysburg, in our last issue. Be sure to check out her website: http://www.wyomingcountyfreepress.com

IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER AND WISH TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER, PLEASE JOIN!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

DATE: _____

Make check payable to The Town of Sheldon Historical Society.
Mail To:
Donna Kirsch, Financial Secretary
4458 Richardson Rd.
Arcade, NY 14009

Membership year is indicated on your address label.

Dues are $5.00 per year or $50.00 for a Lifetime Membership.

Upcoming Events:

Dec. 4, 4-7pm Arcade Historical Soc. "Christmas Magic" at the Gibby House

Dec. 12 Attica Historical Society at Winterfest - Carolers & music by "Old Hippies"; Crafts & Bake Sale

Dec. 14, 7pm Sardinia Historical "Christmas at the Meetinghouse" with the Pioneer Community Band, 12070 Savage Rd., Sardinia - Free concert sponsored by Hist. Society

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