

Between the Lakes

A Newsletter of the
Interlaken Historical Society

Volume 43 No. 1 July 2017

www.InterlakenHistory.org



Bill and Caroline
Pritchard
1951, Canton NY
See Bill's article on
his Korean War
service beginning
on page 4.

Bicentennial Summer Celebration

Come join the celebration. On July 29th at the Interlaken Firemen's Field the Town of Covert Bicentennial Committee and the Interlaken Historical Society will host the Bicentennial Summer Social.

Back in school we learned when writing about an event to include the who, when, where, why and what.

Who Everyone is invited to be a part of the celebration! Life-long residents, new arrivals, visitors, people who don't know much about the Town of Covert and its 200 years of history. This is a free community event, no admission and free on-site parking.

When July 29, 2017 from 1:00 until the last band finishes around 7:30 pm.

Where Interlaken Firemen's Field, corner of Mechanic and Knight Streets, one block from West Avenue (Route 96A). The Fire Department has offered the use of the field to provide the needed space for all of the events and on-site parking as well.

Why The Town of Covert was established in March 1817, 200 years later we are celebrating that event. What better way than a party open to all who would like to join us?

What An all afternoon celebration. Included in the day's events are Civil War living history, paintball demonstration, a dunking booth, live cannon firing, music by several area groups, a petting zoo and kids' games, postal cancellation, raffles and food. Free food!

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Welcome New Trustee

Cindy Lysiak

A Bit of My History

"Home At Last!!" Such were my joyous sentiments uttered on Saturday, June 28, 2014. I know someone heard me! I had retired from the Buffalo Public School System on Friday, June 27, 2014 where I had taught 6th Grade Math for the bulk of my career. If it had not been for having to attend my retirement party, my dogs and cats and I would have been here on that same Friday evening! While some retired teachers lament their decision come that first September, my joy was redoubled at the thought of experiencing life here without interruption.

My relationship with Interlaken dates back to 1978 when my husband and I were seeking to purchase our first home. The realtor took us to many houses, but we knew the 'fixer upper' on West Avenue felt like home. We had been living in an apartment at Gaslight Village in Ithaca after I had

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graduated from SUNY at Oswego in 1976 and after we were married in 1977. With every penny saved and a little help from my uncle, we excitedly moved into our first home here in Interlaken in June of 1979. We and our family and friends quickly set forth with renovations and celebrations after each accomplishment. Then, in 1983, my husband was promoted and we were required to move to Buffalo. We settled in East Aurora, just south of Buffalo, but I so hated to leave... The house in Interlaken was sold to Robert and Dorothy Anderson. Ironically, they were moving from the Buffalo area to Interlaken as Dorothy was hired to teach school in Ithaca.

Meanwhile, Maryannis Folts, who lived directly across the street on West Ave., and I kept in touch. Via a Christmas card she informed us that the Anderson's were selling 'our' house. A long story made short, we arranged to purchase the property back from them and in 1995 took full possession. I was later awarded the property in my divorce settlement. While my own teaching career was underway in Buffalo I spent summers here, closing the house down each Columbus Day weekend. I'm sure it wasn't easy on the old place (or on me) but she held up – keeping my dream of retiring here alive.

I finally was able to have a reliable heating system installed after teaching nights at Canisius College as an adjunct professor in the Education and Sociology Departments. I no longer had to close the house down for the winter and found myself drawn here on

weekends and school holidays. For two years I drove back and forth from Buffalo every weekend (I only missed two weekends - due to bad weather) contributing many gray hairs to my friends and neighbors on both ends of the trek.

I owe many, many thanks to those friends and neighbors who kept a good eye, and then some, on my beloved house over the years. Lou Jerger, The Barrows, including Glen and Wendy, The Perrys, The Wings, The Late Pattersons, Nina Papperman, Nancy Uyeno, and some I may not even be aware of, are appreciated with affection more than they can ever know. Also, a heartfelt, huge thanks to Mrs. Folts. Although she's no longer with us, her spirit is and always will be with me. She knew my heart all those years ago; I'm sure she heard me say "Home At Last!!"....

President's Message

With all the events of the past few weeks, and information about the upcoming celebrations, there isn't a lot of room for a President's Message, so I'll just say thank you to all who helped with Olde Home Day, the floats and the museums.

We look forward to seeing everyone on July 29th (Bicentennial Celebration) and again on September 9th for 200 Years of Transportation.

Thank you,
John Hunt

2017 Citizen of the Year
WEBB WILSON RANKIN

The 2017 Citizen of the Year is truly a lifelong resident of the Village of Interlaken. Webb Rankin still lives in the house on Mechanic Street where he born 96 years ago.

He attended the old Grade School and Interlaken High School. As part of his senior class trip the group visited Gettysburg, PA. While there, they met Veterans of the Civil War who were gathering for the 75th reunion of the 1863 Battle at Gettysburg.

After graduating from High School, Webb enrolled in the nursing program at Willard State Hospital. During World War II he joined the U.S. Navy as a Corpsman, and he completed his training a very short way from home, at Sampson. Since he already had a nursing degree, the Navy sent him to Cornell University for his Bachelor's Degree in Nursing. Weekends and summers were spent with the U.S. Navy.

Cornell sent their nursing students to Bellevue Hospital in New York City for hands-on-training. It was there that he met his bride-to-be-“Chick” (Marion), who was a nursing student in Boston, also doing training at Bellevue.

Although Cornell did not allow their students to marry, Webb and Chick were married secretly. They

had four children, three daughters, Patricia, Joan and Linda - and one son, Kevin.

Following his wartime service, Webb worked at Willard State Hospital until he retired as the Director of Nursing.

In addition to service to his church, Webb has served the community as a Justice of the Peace, Seneca County Coroner, Commander of the Interlaken American Legion post, and in 1996, was one of leaders in the effort to place an all veterans monument at Lake View Cemetery. For many years Webb was on the board of the Interlaken Historical Society and is often a docent at the Farmers' Museum.

Webb still walks to the post office, and can be counted on to assist in answering many of the way-back when questions about community life and events.

Today as we honor Webb as the community's Citizen of the Year, we do so with thanks for all he has contributed over



2017 Citizen of the Year, Webb Rankin with Valerie Bassett

Service During the Korean War

By Bill Pritchard

I joined the Naval Reserve in 1951 while still at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York. My memories were many, especially the 120-mile round trip to Watertown in snowy winter weather for my weekly training sessions.

After graduation from college in 1952, I returned home to help run the Interlaken Sales Co. Dodge garage with my Dad, Jim Pritchard. The building is now the Seneca Fitness Center owned by Doug and Penelope McGill. My Dad only spent two days per week at Interlaken because of his commitment to his father's Dodge dealership in Ithaca, so I helped run the Interlaken store in his absence. We had some great employees – Helen Patrick in the office, Charlie Kelly in sales, and technicians Howard Potts, Al Wright, Jim White, Alan “Abie” Grant, and Charles “Butch” Pell.

In October 1953, I requested active duty in the Navy and left one evening from Ithaca to New York on The Black Diamond, headed for the Brooklyn Navy Yard. If you've ever worn a dress blue Navy uniform with the thirteen buttons in the front, you can imagine the problems removing your trousers in the cramped quarters of a train berth. I finally arrived in New York, and I and my sea bag made it to the navy yards. After being assigned my bunk, I went through a battery of tests, as well as all those necessary shots. I remember the

recruit in front of me passed out while receiving his inoculations. The navy corpsman administering the shots could be heard asserting that when that happens, the next three in line will also faint. I guess I was just tough enough to make it through. After the many aptitude tests, my advisor suggested I try for officer candidate school. I decided not to commit for three years, when I could be an enlisted sailor for two years. I was really interested in serving my time, and returning home to the automobile business.

I was sent to the Bainbridge Naval Training Center in Maryland to become a tele man. A tele man is basically a communications person. After graduation, I was assigned to Main Navy Building in Washington, D.C. This building was built in 1918 as a temporary facility, and was demolished in 1970 to become the Constitution Gardens where the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is now located.

The facility was basically a message relay station consisting of several huge banks of equipment spewing out ticker tape messages from all over the world. If any of these messages were garbled, we had to fix them before sending them on. The very important messages would be ended by a bell, which required immediate attention. I remember one time a message came through announcing the arrival of an admiral to the Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida, on a certain date and time. The “important” bell

rang, but the message was somehow ignored. The admiral arrived on schedule, but no one was there to greet him. Thank the Lord this didn't happen on my shift and we never found out what discipline was doled out.

In 1954 I told my Dad I intended to marry Caroline. He told me I shouldn't do that because I was in the Navy and might be transferred at any time. Also, he was concerned about her not having a job in Washington. My Dad didn't realize that Caroline already had a job, being able to transfer from Cornell University to the main headquarters in Washington, dealing with electrical tube research at Aeronautical Radio, Inc.

We were married in July 1954, spent our honeymoon in Canada on a fishing trip (we have the pictures to prove it), and returned to Washington until my discharge in October 1955. By the way, we lived in Georgetown for \$450.00 per month. The apartment had no air conditioning, but a huge fan took care of that.

After returning to Interlaken, we rented an apartment on Orchard Street, the Catherine Chambers house, until we moved into our present home on Main Street. We raised our family there, and though we lost our oldest son Bob in 1982, we feel very fortunate and pleased that Tom, Dan, and Patti all live nearby.

A few views from Olde Home Day June 10th *South Seneca Elementary Marching Band*



Interlaken Fire Department Display



The gun collection is always a draw for visitors. Rick Lewis and Gary Chapin from Odessa are examining one of the guns.

Covert Town's 200 Year Connection A Backbone Story

Before we begin let me explain where this ironic story happened. The Backbone, more appropriately called the Backbone Ridge, is the most prominent terrain feature running high above and between, and gently falling, in some places, from nearly 1,600 feet, to the shores of two of New York's most beautiful Finger Lakes, Cayuga Lake on the East and Seneca Lake on the West. Our story takes place in only one small portion of this miles-long area and that is in the Town of Hector on the "Seneca Lake Side" in Schuyler County and in the Town of Covert on the "Cayuga Lake Side" in Seneca County.

It is by accident that I discovered a "connection" between our two main characters both of whom we shall meet shortly. While doing some research about the property where our Seneca County, Town of Covert home is located I came across a posting in the Seneca County Historic Archives Book of Wills: the 1835 Will of Christopher Smith of Covert, Seneca County, NY. The details of that will, complete with a Summary and the Probate of the Will was presented on the internet by a direct descendent of the former Christopher Smith: Lynn Stevenson Fisher. She is the descendent "via James Stevenson (her father); Clinton R.L. Stevenson; Nancy Mary Smith Stevenson; Fithen Halsey Smith; Peter Smith, (Christopher's son)." I owe a

debt of gratitude to Lynn as it was she who provided the historical "spark" bringing the beginnings of this story to light and how the passage of time gave an historic common bond between our story's two "former New Jersey citizens."

Our "connection" began in New Jersey where our two main characters, separated by the passage of time, began their separate paths that would cross some 190 years later. Hunterdon County New Jersey, from which Morris and Sussex Counties would devolve during the late 1700's, was the starting place for both of them. The eldest of our two principals emigrated from Hunterdon County, NJ to Seneca County New York with his family the Christopher Smiths in 1804(as per the *Trumansburg Free Press* History of Trumansburg, 1800): the youngest came to Seneca County New York with her family, the Charles Dendis' from Morris County, NJ, just a short distance from Hunterdon County in 1946. As a side note: our youngest character was born in Sussex County NJ many years later but very close to the eighteenth century birthplace of our eldest person thereby making this "connection" even more wondrous. Both of our characters' families ironically settled on land in the Town of Covert less than a mile from each other, but many years apart. As a matter of fact our youngest character grew to adulthood in one of only two of today's remaining homes built by the original families of our eldest settler. The neighborhood

we are talking about centers around the Intersection of Burdick Road and County Road 143 (formerly known as Bates Road) in the Town of Covert, in the south of Seneca County, NY, just about equidistance from the Villages of Interlaken and Trumansburg. This area in the early days was known as Liberty Corners.

In those early years of 1800 the little settlement of Liberty Corners, in addition to its several homes, had its own neighborhood blacksmith shop on the north side of Bates Road close to South Burdick Road; the District No. 9 School House on the west side of South Burdick Road; a Methodist Church (sometimes referred to as a Chapel) and its Cemetery a short way East (downhill) on the South side of Bates Road from the intersection with Burdick Road; and, located across Bates road from the Chapel, was the Liberty Corners Post Office registered in the United States Postal System in 1835. The original Post Master was Joseph Skinner whose home (and where we surmise the post office was lodged) was just across Bates Road from the Church and Cemetery. This information was given to me from the United States Postal Archivist in answer to my inquiry as to the existence of this long since forgotten Post Office.

Well, you ask, who were these first settlers “in these parts” – this information is readily available from the History of Seneca County, the County tax records and proper-

ty deed information and is also readily found on the property owner Maps of the mid 1850’s by original surveyors Gray and Lothrop as found on the internet in full detail courtesy of William S. Hecht’s Roots Web Historic site. The area we are directly concerned with is a four-lot square composed of the Military Lots Number 82 and 83 which are side-by-side and located directly north of the side-by-side Lots 94 and 95. The intersection of Bates and Burdick Roads, Liberty Corners, is the geographic center of these four lots, and is the “focal point of interest” concerning our “two main characters” in our story. To clarify for you what these “Military Lots” are we refer you to the History of New York and its part in the Revolutionary War where the area we are discussing was divided into “mile square lots” and awarded as payment to the Revolutionary War Soldiers for their duty during that War. As told to me by our Archivist Lynn Stevenson Fisher and her family the first to arrive in this locale was John Smith in 1793. How he was originally able to obtain the ownership of this property in this Military Lot area I have not been able to find. However, Lynn’s family history has it that John did not wish to settle here but about 1803 sold the property to his father Christopher Smith. According to the 1828 last will of Christopher Smith the title to some 60 plus acres along what is known as Burdick Road today in Military Lots 94 and 95 passed on to his

son Isiah Smith, known in later years, because of his duty in the War of 1812, as General Isiah Smith. Isiah's siblings also shared in the gifts of their father Christopher's 1828 Will, of other land in and around Liberty Corners. From our historical resources mentioned above the very home Gen. Isiah Smith lived in was just across Burdick Road from its intersection with the Dunn Road as pinpointed on Lot 95 in the Maps mentioned above. Isiah Smith is our "eldest character" - we are going to discuss him further in relation to our "youngest character" and how they are "connected" in spite of so many years.

Above we talked about the other settlers in the early 1800's Liberty Corners neighborhood. Aside from the members of the Christopher and Charity Smith families we found the Browns, Skinners, Hazeltons, Robinsons and Wakemans, many of whom now Rest in Peace in the Cemetery of the little Methodist Chapel on Bates Road(now County Road 143) just down a bit from Liberty Corners.

We know that General Isiah Smith and his wife Annis Tremain Smith built their home in Military Lot 95 on a small ridge about 300 feet East off Burdick Road because we have identified the site from the property owners map noted above and the actual existing built-up stone foundation of their home that is still there in a small copse of trees. We don't know when Isiah and his wife Annis, the daughter of Abner and Mary McLallen Tremain, built their home

but we do know that Annis' father Abner was a founding father of the Village of Trumansburg, another interesting historic fact about Liberty Corners. Well, you ask, how does this all make a "connection" between the "eldest character, 1804 Isiah Smith" of Liberty Corners, formerly of New Jersey, and the "youngest character," the daughter of Charles and Sophie Knapik Dendis who moved their family to the area, formerly known as Liberty Corners, from New Jersey in 1946?

This is the Connection:

Mildred, or Millie as she is more familiarly called, is the daughter of the Dendis' - she was born in Sussex County New Jersey, an early part of Hunterdon County- so too was Isiah Smith. Both Millie and Isiah as youngsters moved to Covert Town New York with their families. Both grew up in the same neighborhood, albeit nearly 200 years apart. Isiah married a "local girl", his Annis, from Trumansburg about 5 miles from his Liberty Corners home; Millie married a "local boy," her Gerry Messmer, (whose family began on the Hector side of the Backbone) who was from Interlaken about 5 miles from her Liberty Corners home. Isiah was a military man, a general officer from the 1812 War; Gerry too was a military officer of the modern day "Cold War." Millie and Gerry Messmer would also make their home in Military Lot 95 about 300 feet off Burdick Road, just as Isiah and Annis Smith did; little did Millie know that the land they would purchase was the 1830

site of Isiah and Annis Smith's home 150 years before –little too, until 2016 did she know that the farm home she grew up in was one of only two original homes still in existence today in Military Lot 95; all she knew was the love of the area in which she grew up and that her dream was someday to own land in the neighborhood she grew up in. That dream came true in the fall of 1980 when she heard about some land with a partially constructed home on Burdick Road, just around the corner from her childhood home, was to be auctioned at a public sale on the County Court House steps in Ovid, New York.

On that rainy cold fall day Millie and Gerry went to Ovid. They were the only two people to appear at that sale. With trepidation they made a bid they felt they could afford and were told by the Lawyers for the owner that they would be notified. A few days later Millie was unbelievably pleased and happy to realize her dream had come true when the call came through that our bid had been accepted. Her childhood dream to have her own country home in the place she so loved had come true. We completed the little "ranchette," as we called it, and moved from our Interlaken home a short time later. And would you know General Isiah and Annis Smith's original home site is just a couple hundred feet from our back porch. So you see the "connection" is an ongoing process that began at the turn of the 18th century in a place called Liberty Corners some 200 years ago in the Town of Covert, part of our Town's 2017 Bicentennial Celebration.

Respectfully submitted, Gerry Messmer

July 2017 9

Saturday, July 29th
Town of Covert Bicentennial Celebration
Interlaken Firemen's Field

- 1:00 Event opens to all, free admission
 - 1:30 Reynolds' Battery Cannon Firing
 - 2:15 Crosseyed Fish (country music)
 - 3:00 Harmony Falls
 - 3:45 Songs from *Godspell*, by the
Between the Lakes Players,
 - 4:30 Reenactment of 1900 School
Corner Stone laying
 - 5:15 Comments by dignitaries and a look
at Covert's History
 - 6:00 Announcement of the Raffle
winners, *need not be present to win*
 - 6:15 Reynolds' Battery Cannon Firing
 - 6:30 Crosseyed Cat Band
- Throughout the day Paint Ball Demonstration, Postal Cancellation, Petting Zoo, Kids Games, Civil War Living History, Dunking Booth.
- For the first 200 visitors: Free Cayuga Lake Creamery Ice cream, free food from Mama Mia's. For everyone, free popcorn.
- The art show entries will be on display as well as other organizational displays.

Join the Celebration!

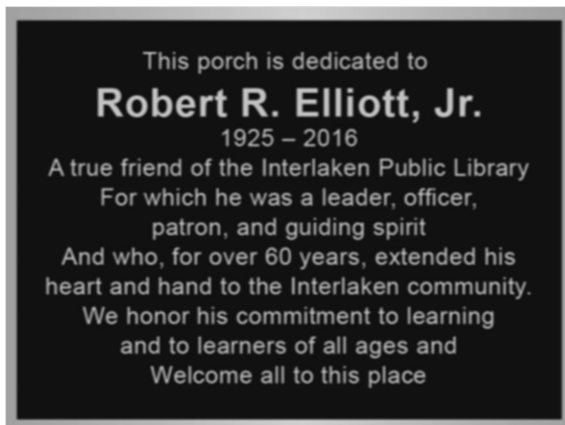


Library News

Olde Homes Day 2017 at the Interlaken Public Library was a smashing success! Our beautiful new porch was dedicated to one of our most inspiring and supportive patrons, Mr. Robert Elliott. Mr. Elliott sat as the President on the Board of Trustees for several years and was a long-time supporter of the Interlaken Public Library. Mr. Elliott's family was in attendance for the dedication and a plaque commemorating his memory and contribution was displayed.

The library also participated in the parade, giving away over 250 books to children and families along the parade route. Children from the Monday Storytime program participated in the parade and giveaway, generously delivering the books to community members who lined the streets on the parade route. The library was open all day for community members to see the newly renovated interior, enjoy the new porch, as well as take part in the annual book sale and children's art activity with Miss Mimi.

Chelsea Stirlen



New Library Hours
Effective April 1, 2017
Monday & Wednesday 9 am to 1 pm
Tuesday & Thursday 1 pm to 7 pm
Saturday 9 am to noon

*A look at the new circulation desk .
Stop in to see all the new additions.*



Summer Celebration continued from page 1

The Interlaken Historical Society received a grant from the Delavan Foundation which is providing the first 200 visitors a free Ice Cream Sundae from Cayuga Lake Creamery, and items from a short menu from Mama Mia's. For the free on-site food items, be sure to stop at one of the welcome tents for the tickets.

Speaking of food, and a current political catch phrase...shared services...South Seneca Central School is providing the popcorn machine so that free popcorn will be available all day. A thank you to Joe Borst, Fawn Updike and their Boy Scouts for helping with this part of the event.

One other food item will be cakes and baked goods. As part of the silent auction, there will be cakes and other baked goods being given away. Local businesses and individuals have provided items for the raffle. Your donation of \$5.00 will give you 10 tickets to place in bags attached to the item you hope to win. Winning tickets will be drawn and announced at 6:00. Winners need not be present to win.

Gary and George Hunt will have a paint ball demonstration, stop over and try it out. Reynolds' Battery 1st NY Light Artillery, Civil War reenactment unit will be on hand with cannon, forge, sutlery, and a leather worker. They will also provide two cannon firing demonstrations. The US Post Office will set up Covert Station to cancel stamped items either to take home, or send through the mail.

For the kids, games, the big red train and a petting zoo. The dunking tank still needs volunteers---to take the plunge. Close by, in case the tank gets low, will be the Interlaken Fire Department with their new truck. Teams are needed for the corn hole tournament.

Bring a lawn chair and enjoy all the music and stage events. Cross-eyed Fish, Harmony Falls, and a preview by the Between the Lakes Players with songs from *Godspell*. Also on the stage a reenactment of the 1900 cornerstone laying for the old school. Of course, no celebration is complete without a few words of wisdom. Closing the day will be the blues band, Crosseyed Cat Band.

Volunteers are needed for a few hours before the event for set up or baked goods, during the event to assist at various locations, and at the end of the day. Contact one of the committee members for more information.

Another **Who**, who to contact with questions or to volunteer to help? The TOC200 committee includes

John Hunt (607-592-3224),

Gary Hunt (607-279-4667),

Mike Reynolds (607-227-8416),

Deb Nottke (607-387-4667) and

Diane Bassette Nelson (607-280-2099).

You can also leave a message at www.Facebook.com/TOC200 which has the latest information on the event.

Come Join the Celebration!

Interlaken Historical Society
PO Box 270
Interlaken, NY 14847-0270

www.InterlakenHistory.org

For more information on these events
contact 607-280-2099
All events are free and open to the public
Bicentennial Summer Social Saturday,
July 29th 1:00 to 7:30 pm
Interlaken Firemen's Field
See page 9 for the day's schedule

Watch for the Fall Newsletter the last week
of August for more details on these events.

200 Years of Transportation,
Saturday, September 9th, 10 am to 3 pm
Brook Farm Barn

An Evening of Music and Dance,
October 14th, Brook Farm Barn

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