

Jefferson Historical Society Newsletter 2018

A review of the past year and Jefferson Historical Society's activities demonstrate this group's dynamic contributions to our community. JHS hosted another successful season of the Maple Museum Music Series, including the concert of early 20th century music by Gary LiCalzi's First Call Brass Band in the bandstand on the Town Green. The Maple Museum itself is looking wonderful after the repair and painting of its exterior, a project paid for with help from the A. Lindsay and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation, the Thomson Trust, and donations from members and friends of JHS. This beautiful building also became the perfect venue for the Jefferson Farmers Market, which was held there each Saturday from Memorial Day weekend to Columbus Day weekend. Our vendors, all from Jefferson and the surrounding area, brought eggs, maple products, honey, dairy, bread and baked goods, meats and a bounty of produce. At the end of the season JHS donated \$100 from vendor fees to the Jefferson Food Bank. The market will reopen Saturday, May 26 and will continue to the Columbus Day weekend.

Volunteers Wanted:

**Give us one of your
summer Saturdays**

**(9-12) to sit at the
JHS table in the mar-
ket!**



Preservation Work

Recently, several properties in the Hamlet of Jefferson have been lovingly restored, greatly improving the look of the Town. In keeping with that spirit, JHS applied for and received a grant from the Preservation League of New York to do an inventory of properties in the Hamlet that might potentially form an Historic District. An aside about Historic Districts: Jefferson's Comprehensive Plan prioritizes the preservation of the Town's historic rural character. In such Districts, property owners become eligible for a tax credit of up to 20% of the cost of substantial rehabilitation of their buildings (pending review in current state and federal budgets. Historic neighborhoods with a distinctive architectural style – like Jefferson's 19th century Greek Revival style, tend to attract tourists and new businesses that benefit from charm and character. Jefferson's new B&B's, which attract customers seeking historic hometown experiences, could certainly see an increase in their businesses. And just to be clear – designation of a district in the Historic Register imposes no restrictions on property owners. Only if owners intend to take advantage of the tax credit program are they bound to follow Dept. of the Interior guidelines for historic rehabilitation.]



The JHS Logo hangs in front of the Hall.

Jefferson Historical Society

Purchases the Masonic Hall

With the help of members and friends, JHS bought Jefferson's Masonic Hall in December 2017. Members of the Lodge had decided to join with Cobleskill, and put their building up for sale. While there is need for somewhat extensive restoration and repair, the building will soon be used to house a local history museum on the upper floor, and a community space for programs, events, art installations and other uses on the first floor. One donor has offered \$10,000 that can be matched, dollar for dollar, to meet the cost of repairing the roof — a project planned for this spring! A donation form is on page 9.

A Brief History of the Masonic Hall, by Stephanie Ruquet

In mid-December of last year, the Jefferson Historical Society purchased the Masonic Hall, a truly unique and historic building in the heart of the hamlet, on Main Street near the village green. The Jefferson Masonic Lodge, officially named Working Lodge 554 Free & Approved Masons, was organized in 1864. Construction of the Hall was begun shortly thereafter, and was completed in 1866 (1865 according to Mildred Bailey 's book). The building was not only the home of the lodge for the next 151 years, it was also an integral part of the community. Many public events were held there and at least four organizations in addition to the Lodge met in the building.

Leila Chapter No. 348, Order of the Eastern Star, was organized in 1905. Both Working Lodge and Leila Chapter were very popular, active organizations with large memberships of folks from the Jefferson area. The local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal organization comprised of Union Civil War veterans, held their meetings at the Masonic Hall beginning in 1880. Their rental fee was \$20 per year plus, they had to furnish their own fuel and lights. When an Odd Fellows Lodge was organized in Jefferson in 1905, they first met in the Masonic Hall. In 1917, the Jefferson branch of the American Red Cross was organized and it, too, met at the Masonic Hall, and in their case, free of charge. Continued on page 3.

Masonic Hall continued . . .

Throughout most of the 1800s, the Masonic Hall was owned by individuals rather than the Lodge itself and the Lodge had to pay rent. The original owner of the property at the time the hall was built was Moses S. Wilcox, who sold it to Elizabeth McArthur, who sold it to Charles N. Childs. Horace Nichols owned it in the 1880s. In 1908, members of the Working Lodge purchased their hall from Earl D. and Ella Topping. To create income for the Lodge, sometime in the late 1800s part of the main floor was converted into an apartment which was rented out until about 1902. The veranda was added to the building in 1913.

At various times in the past, the Hall has also served as a venue for wedding receptions and as a place for youngsters to spend their after-school hours. Dinners and ice cream socials the Lodge hosted there for the public were popular events. In 1917, about 60 people attended a festive banquet with a program of speeches, music, oratory and presentations of gifts held at the Hall to honor Mr. & Mrs. Charles E. Nichols of Jefferson. Earlier in the year, Nichols had begun his term as Justice of the Supreme Court of the Third Judicial District of New York.

In 1992 through 1996, the Jefferson Town Court was located in the Hall. To adapt the building for the court staff, an extension was built onto the building for an office for the judges (there were two in those days) and the court clerk. Court was held on the main floor. For jury trials the jury would go upstairs to the Lodge Room for their deliberations.



JHS hopes to restore the Hall to the condition pictured here.

In 2017, Working Lodge, the only group still using the Masonic Hall, merged with Cobleskill Lodge No.394 F. & A. M. and the Hall was put up for sale. The Jefferson Historical Society is grateful to those members and friends who contributed toward the purchase of this wonderful old building. There is a lot of work ahead to restore and rehabilitate it. Replacing the roof and reinforcing the roof trusses will be the first phase of the work and is expected to begin in the spring. At the same time, work will begin to organize and conserve records left behind in the building.

Did you attend an event at the Jefferson Masonic Hall? Hang out there after school? Were you or a family member part of any of the organizations that met at the Hall? Do you have any photographs of the Hall or any events held there that you are willing to let us scan into our digital archives? The Historical Society welcomes your memories of the Jefferson Masonic Hall.

History & Nature Trail

Recently the wetlands behind Jefferson Town Hall was acquired by the Town. JHS, in collaboration with the SUNY Cobleskill Student Wildlife Society, the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Jefferson Boy Scout Troop 50, and the Jefferson Central School, will create a walking trail that leads past the ruins of the historic Mann Brothers Mill, the Fuller District One Room School House, and along the streams and wetlands off Foote Rd.

Below left: JHS members approach the ruins of the Mill as they flag the new trail.



Below right: Ruins of the Mill , Built in 1900.



Originally, the Mann Brothers Mill was situated on the South side of N. Harpersfield Rd. and was powered by water from their pond and the stream that flows into the Middle Brook. The Manns operated the mill, grinding grain between two large mill stones — the very ones that are now installed in front of the Maple Museum. When the mill burned, around 1900, a new mill was built across the street, adjacent to Foote Rd., apparently on the site of a mill once operated by Anthony Judd, brother of Jefferson’s founding father, Stephen Judd. This mill was powered by steam. In a creative example of multi-tasking, the miller, Elmer Totten, also funneled the steam through an iron pipe that criss-crossed a pan of sap, thus causing it to evaporate into syrup. This novel way to boil sap was reported by Mildred Bailey, in her *History of Jefferson*. She also tells the story that when enough grain had been received at the Mann Mill to warrant starting it up, “an employee would sound a whistle. This was a signal for Totten to go and start grinding. Mr. Totten, upon hearing the whistle, would run to the mill across the fields in back of the village and begin the grinding,” (from *Marian S. Lynes’ book, Water-Powered Grist Mills of Schoharie County.*)

At the upper end of the trail is the Fuller District One Room Schoolhouse. During summer the building will be open on the first Saturday of the months of July, August and September from 10-2. There is a place to park there, and also at the other end of the trail behind Town Hall, next to the Jefferson Town Court.





William S. Reed,
A Jefferson Civil War
Veteran
by Stephanie Ruquet

Jefferson Veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, William Reed in the center

William S. Reed, born in Jefferson in 1843, was a local farmer and Civil War veteran. According to the NYS Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, William had black eyes, brown hair, a dark complexion, and stood 5'11" tall. He enlisted in the 134th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment on August 13, 1862, and was mustered in as a private on September 22, 1862. The 134th Regiment was made up of volunteers from Schoharie and Schenectady Counties (then the 14th NYS Senatorial District) and William was in Company E, which was made up of soldiers from Jefferson and the surrounding towns. The regiment saw action first at Chancellorsville, VA, then at Gettysburg, PA. In the autumn of 1863, William contracted a fever during the Knoxville, TN, campaign and he was furloughed home. After his recovery, he rejoined his regiment in 1864, seeing action in a number of places including Atlanta and Savannah. He was promoted to the rank of corporal on April 30, 1865. On May 24, 1865, the Regiment marched in the Grand Review of Sherman's troops in Washington, DC. William was mustered out at Bladensburg, MD, on June 12, 1865.

William returned home and, except for the period about 1900-1905 when he and his family resided in Harpersfield, he lived in Jefferson for the rest of his life. William and his wife, Maria A. Barger (1844-1926), had three surviving children: Marvin B. (b. 1870), Claribell (aka Clara, b. 1874), and Wallace (b. 1881). A daughter, LuLu Belle, died in infancy (1868-1869).

By 1925 William had retired from farming and he and Maria lived in the hamlet, on Park Avenue. William S. Reed died on February 16, 1927. He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery with his wife, Maria, and their daughter, LuLu Belle. William's son, Marvin, was also a farmer in Jefferson. He married Sarah M. Carrington and they had four children: Arthur, Amanda, Cora and Claude. Amanda's daughter, Sarah P. Malec of Fredericksburg, TX, was the donor of her great-grandfather's Civil War discharge document and we are grateful to her for preserving this valuable link to Jefferson's past.

The Stamford Village Library was a valuable resource in researching information about William S. Reed. Their local history collection contained a variety of useful volumes including Civil War regimental histories and local cemetery indexes. Online sources yielding pertinent information included *ancestry.com*, *findagrave.com*, and *dmna.ny.gov*

Willard Rising Stewart Diary by Kevin Berner

When the Jefferson Historical Society gained access to the 1933 diary of Willard Rising Stewart, my interest was piqued because, while I am not a direct descendant, he is my first cousin three times removed. Willard is much more closely related to Ardith Stewart Hamm, who lives in the old South Jefferson schoolhouse. She is his granddaughter. The diary describes Willard's day to day life as a lonely widower doing farm work for relatives.

Willard spent his entire life in the Jefferson area. His parents, John N. and Mary Jane (Curtis) Stewart, lived for many years along what is now Rt. 10, just south of Cape Horn Rd. Willard grew up with his siblings Frank, Charles G., and Delmar Stewart. He married Ella Shew in 1887. They had three children: Maude, born in 1889, John Tunis, born in 1898 and Florence, born in 1900. In 1907, Ella died, so Maude, 16 and the oldest, helped raise the younger children with additional help from Willard's sister-in-law, Sarah "Sate" Shew.

I have scanned the diary and prepared materials to give it context. I have included photos of family members and the home-site, a chronology of Willard's life, and genealogical information. There is also a listing of all the individuals mentioned in the diary, if/how they are related to Willard, based on 1930 census data, what their occupations were three years before the diary was written. Readers will get an idea of what day to day life over the course of one year was like for a person living in rural Jefferson over 80 years ago.



Left photo: The Stewart family including Willard at the end of the first row.

Right photo: Willard Stewart's parents John and Mary Jane Stewart on the porch of the house where Willard lived during the period covered by his 1933 diary.



Left photo: Willard Stewart with his children, Maude (in back), Florence, and John T. Stewart

Right photo: Willard Stewart with his granddaughter Ardith Stewart Hamm and his son John Tunis Stewart



Schools of Jefferson Village by Kevin Berner

The first school in the heart of Jefferson was a log building built on the green in either 1797 or 1799. It was roughly opposite the building which is now the Heartbreak Hotel. The green itself was donated to the town by Colonel Stephen Judd, one of the first land-owners in Jefferson. The two room school was built out of spruce logs by Judd's half-brother Erasmus. The bark removed from those logs was used for the building's roof. One room was used as a classroom and second was where the teacher lived. Both rooms had a fireplace sharing a central chimney. The first teacher was Heman Hickok.



The second school was the three story Jefferson Academy. Although the school's construction began around 1812, it was not fully completed for a decade. Classes finally started in 1817. Heman Hickok and Stephen Judd were instrumental in its development. In addition, people from Jefferson and the surrounding area purchased \$25 stocks to support its development. Its incorporation took place in 1824 and the Academy became chartered by the state in 1825, as reported

in the Jefferson Courier, or in 1833, according to Bailey's history of Jefferson. The building, which was the first of its kind in the county, was built where the Methodist church currently stands on land donated by Judd, who also provided additional money to support it. The three story square building was between 45 and 50 ft. on each side and contained a library and laboratory. Reverend William Salisbury from the Presbyterian church was the first principal or headmaster. Students gathered daily at dawn for a half hour worship service. Enrollment at the Academy peaked at 152 students in 1847. Tuition costs for students were \$3-\$5 per term. Although it attracted students from a wide area, due to the widespread perception that it provided only a mediocre education, it did not attract large numbers of students during much of its existence from 1812 to 1851. The Academy's corporation was dissolved in 1854 and in 1860 the structure was torn down.

A two room school was the third village school; it too sat on the current site of the Methodist church. This wood framed building provided schooling by two teachers until 1900 when, as newspaper articles in 1900 reported, Dr. Richtmyer Hubbell had it



moved to near his 13-sided barn for use as a tenement house. Bailey, however, described its being moved to just east of the present grange hall and then used as a blacksmith shop by Frank Hubbell and George Francis. Bailey also stated that the school's belfry served as a lookout for boys watching baseball games on a field where the front lawn of where the current school stands. **School Houses continued on page 8 . . .**



The construction of the fourth educational facility in the center of town started in June 1900. This was the Jefferson Union Free School, which was also on the site of today's Methodist Church. In 1903, the school was reclassified from "Union Free School" to a "High School." This reclassification required larger library holdings, more apparatus, more teachers doing strictly academic work,

and incoming students meeting eighth grade educational requirements. The high school was designed for students who had completed their earlier education in the small district schools. Later it was used as an elementary school after the current school was constructed. A Jefferson Courier article in 1902 described additions to the library and chemistry and physical laboratories, and that the school attracted students from outside the district so that more space might be needed. Advertisements in the Courier noted that courses in Latin, Greek, Modern Languages, Science, History, and Mathematics were taught, as well as art and music. The advertisement also claimed that the high school did a good job of preparing students for college, teaching, business, and bookkeeping. Other articles in the Courier described the school's chapel being used for public presentations. In a 1904 Courier, just four students were reported to have graduated. The site where the old high school stood was sold to the Methodist Church in 1953 for \$1000 and the school was then torn down.

The brick school built in 1936 is still being used today. It was initially constructed for grades seven through twelve while first through sixth grade remained in the wooden framed school on the green. A 1953 addition to the high school allowed elementary students to join the junior and high school students and the school on the green was demolished .



JCS Alumni Association reunion to be held Saturday, June 2nd, 2018. The Jefferson Historical Society will again hold a reception preceding the banquet, from 2—3:30 pm. Please join us in the Maple Museum for light refreshments and a display of Jefferson memorabilia.

Membership — Join or Renew

Individual: \$15.00 _____

Couple (family): \$25.00 _____

Lifetime Individual: \$100.00 _____

Lifetime Couple (family): \$150.00 _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone _____

Email address: _____

Contributions to the Jefferson Historical Society, a 501©(3) not-for-profit are currently tax deductible. We welcome your support.

Donations:

In Memory of/honor of: _____

Please specify which fund

Amount

Masonic Hall Restoration _____

Maple Museum Restoration _____

Maple Museum Free Music & More Series _____

General Fund _____

If your company offers matching grants, please contact us so we can register with them: historicalsocietyjefferson@gmail.com

TO:

Jefferson, NY 12093

P.O. Box 143

The Jefferson Historical Society

Sunday, April 15, 2pm: Kevin Berner's book Jefferson Then & Now Volume II to be discussed — YOUR INPUT NEEDED to identify photos and contribute to this next volume. Danforth Community Center, downstairs, Rte 10, Jefferson (across the street from the school).

Jefferson Farmers Market Saturdays, May 26—October 6, 9-12 am, inside the Maple Museum

Special Holiday Market to be announced

Saturday, June 2nd: Jefferson Central School Alumni Association Reception in the Maple Museum

Fuller District One Room Schoolhouse open 1st Saturdays: July, August & September 10-2pm

Maple Museum Free Music & More 2018

With funding from the New York State Council on the Arts (administered by the Greene County Council on the Arts Community Arts Grants fund) JHS will again present a series of concerts in the Maple Museum. Here is the line-up:

Sunday, July 1, 2 pm: Upper Catskill String Quartet

Friday, July 13, 7pm: Blues Maneuver under the tent on the Green, night before Heritage Day

Sunday, July 29, 2pm: Dave Ruch performing 19th Century Songs and Stories of Upstate New York

Sunday, August 12, 2pm: Celebration of Strings with the Leonata String Trio and Youth String Ensemble, Briar Rose

